Niles boys take down Mishawaka
Page B1

Stay Safe

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Today's The Herald-Palladium included inside

Niles Star

Established 1886 • Serving Niles, Buchanan and Edwardsburg **DECEMBER 27, 2025** leaderpub.com • A publication of The Herald-Palladium **$4**

Dougan's 2 Broke Eggs-N-Griddle opens in Niles

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — For 25 years, Dougan's Pitstop was a go-to place for classic, comforting food options in Niles. Now, more than a decade after the original restaurant closed its doors, a new restaurant aims to build on that legacy by offering customers a fresh, tasty dine-in experience.

Dougan's 2 Broke Eggs-N-Griddle, 402 Wayne St., Niles, officially opened its doors Monday morning following a Saturday soft opening. The restaurant, co-owned by Tanya Dougan-Kener and Ann Hampton, is open from 6 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. seven days a week and features many of the classic breakfast, lunch and dinner staples customers are familiar with.

Dougan's has deep roots in the community, originally operated by the Dougan-Kener's mother, Terry, from the late 1988 until 2013. Over the years, it evolved from a train-themed depot to a NASCAR-themed pit stop before being sold when Terry retired. After passing through several owners, the building was eventually purchased by Jim Morris, owner of Jim's Smokin' Cafe and a friend of Dougan-Kener. Morris' purchase of the building opened the door for Dougan-Kener and longtime friend Hampton to return to the space and revive the restaurant's presence in the community.

"When this opportunity came up, I looked at it and told my husband, 'I can't do this without you, but I think we could do this,'" Hampton said. "He said if that's what I wanted, he was in. Here we are, two and a half months later."

While the decision to include "Dougan's" in the name was done to honor the legacy of Dougan-Kener's mother and grandparents, Hampton said "2 Broke Eggs-N-Griddle" was born from a lighthearted joke between herself and Dougan-Kener.

"Tanya wanted her name as part of it to honor her mom and grandparents. I suggested "2 Broke Eggs" because we're two girls starting out with just eggs and a griddle," Hampton said. "Everything just seemed to fall into place like it was meant to be."

The journey to opening day was a labor of love as Dougan-Kener, Hampton and their

See **DOUGAN'S**, page A6

Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications

Front row, from left: Tanya Dougan-Kener, Ann Hamtpon, Gary Hampton. Back: Ben Milby, Vicky Russsell, Wendy Cowan.

Q&A

Balancing benefits

Maureen Adams pushes for advocacy at Berrien County Veteran Services

By LOUISE WREGE
For Leader Publications

ST. JOSEPH — Helping people receive the services they qualify for has become second nature to Maureen Adams.

As the director of Berrien County Veteran Services, Adams said she learned to be an advocate through CAUSE (Citizens Alliance to Uphold Special Education) when her two adult sons were in school.

"I learned how to respectfully disagree," said Adams, 62, who moved to Southwest Michigan in 1998 when her husband's job transferred him to the area.

She's now using her advocacy skills to help veterans. Adams said navigating the available benefits through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) can often feel like playing Monopoly without knowing the rules.

"We have all these pieces and here we go," she said. "Everybody is doing the best they can and doing what they think is the right thing to do, but nobody's saying, 'Are we doing everything that we can do?'"

Adams received statewide recognition for her work in November during the 2025 Michigan Military and Veterans Gala, where she was named the Veteran Service Provider of the Year. Since she took over leading the office in 2022, which has since expanded its staff from two to five people, including opening an office in Niles.

Don Campbell / HP staff

Maureen Adams, director of Berrien County Veteran Services, was recently named 2025 Veteran Service Provider of the Year during the Michigan Military and Veterans Gala held by the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency. "I learned how to respectfully disagree," said Adams, 62, who moved to Southwest Michigan in 1998.

Adams sat down with Herald-Palladium Staff Writer Louise Wrege to talk about her life and job.

What's the best part of your job?

Helping the veterans who come in disgruntled about this or that. A lot of times they're frustrated for a reason. I look at it this way. Either I can help identify what the problem is and help them fix that or I can help them understand why it is the way it is. Sometimes they just don't understand.

Some veterans who don't get VA health care, they're frustrated about that because they make too much money to be in the VA health care system. Yes, that's unfortunate, but you need to talk to your legislators about that. They're the ones who can change the rules. Then there's others who have never filed a claim.

We've got vets who have a back injury. They were injured in the service. It's in their record. They're going to the VA (health). And they're frustrated because they're not getting any compensation.

What is compensation?

If you have an accident, illness or injury while you're in the service and it's affecting you today, you can apply to get compensation. (The veterans) know this happened to them in the service and they're maybe getting VA health care for it, but they don't understand there's a whole other side of the benefit house and they just didn't put in the application for it.

VA health doesn't automatically file claims (for compensation). You do that through the (Veterans) Benefits Administration. You have the (Veterans) Health Administration, benefits

See **ADAMS**, page A3

Semi-truck driver dies in I-94 crash

Police: Semi struck while parked on side of highway

By LAUREN RICE
For Leader Publications

BENTON TOWNSHIP — A semi-truck driver died in a multi-vehicle crash Monday morning on I-94 in Berrien County.

Benton Township police and fire officials were called to the scene of the crash at 5:43 a.m. Monday near the 29-mile marker of eastbound I-94 and found two semi-trucks on fire.

According to a news release from the Benton Township Police Department, the driver who died has yet to be positively identified. He was taken to the Western Michigan University School of Medicine for an autopsy.

The driver of the other semi was uninjured and is being cooperative with the investigation, Benton Township Detective Lt. Tyler Tiefenbach said in the release.

He said the preliminary investigation indicates one semi was parked on the shoulder of the road and the second semi-truck collided with the first. The Berrien County Accident Reconstruction Team was asked to respond and are continuing to investigate the fatal crash.

Despite speculation on social media, Tiefenbach said neither truck contained hazardous materials. The county hazmat team was requested to assist with the amount of diesel and oil the trucks had put onto the road. The crash closed eastbound lanes for several hours.

Anyone who witnessed the crash is encouraged to contact Sgt. Crystal Mendoza at BTPD at 269-926-8221 or Crime Stoppers at 574-228-STOP.

Contact: lrice@TheHP.com, 932-0360

Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications

Wingstop opened its doors on Dec. 19 after months of anticipation.

Wingstop opens new location in Niles

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — A national wing brand is now frying up wings in Niles.

Wingstop, 930 S. 11th St., opened its doors Friday, Dec. 19 after months of anticipation.

"We've been waiting," said Wingstop Niles owner Ritesh Patel. "We were supposed to open in November but we're finally open. We're so excited to be here in the community."

Founded in 1994 and headquartered in Dallas, TX, Wingstop operates and franchises more than 3,000 restaurants worldwide and offers cooked-to-order and hand sauced-and-tossed classic and boneless wings, tenders and chicken sandwiches with signature sides and housemade ranch and bleu cheese dips.

Wingstop will be open from 10 a.m. to 1 a.m. seven days per week, hoping to capitalize on the Generation Z market with its extended hours.

"At a lot of our locations, we have seen an uptick in sales during those hours because there's demand," he said.

The Niles location is the second Wingstop location to open in Berrien County, joining the Benton Harbor location.

"We have one location in Benton Harbor and one in South Bend/Portage, so this is a good spot for us to be in," Patel said.

Patel said that a grand opening celebration will take place sometime in the coming weeks.

6 54708 09550 1

Today's obituaries
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Rita Turner
Janice Thompson
Robert Duffel
Betty Schoetzow
Wyvonne Johnson
Raejaun Jones
Cleta Caldwell

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Comics	B5	Home & Garden	C7	Television	D3

FRANKLY

Tips and quips

What is Frankly? It is where readers sound off on issues of the day. Have a tip or a quip? Call Frankly at 269-687-7700 or email rich.cains@leaderpub.com.

■ Congratulations to Justyce Cashier, crowned Miss Buchanan! We are so happy for you!

■ World peace should be our top priority. It's never too late.

■ The White House "Walk of Shame" is a sad display of the vindictive, hateful little man who wrote them.

■ Crimes against children keep happening because the perpetrators keep getting a slap on the wrist.

■ RIP my friend Leon "Andy" Anderson. You did great things for our area and will be missed.

■ It sure seems like the shopping is more expensive this year than last. Not sure where the White House gets its data from.

■ If Obamacare was so good, why is it so much more expensive now?

■ I think we should focus more on the good things surrounding us rather than just the bad.

WEATHER

Saturday: Mostly cloudy, with a high near 48.

Saturday Night: A 40 percent chance of rain. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 35.

Sunday: A chance of rain before 1pm, then a chance of rain and snow. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 45. Chance of precipitation is 40 percent.

Sunday Night: A 50 percent chance of snow. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 15. Breezy.

Monday: A 30 percent chance of snow. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 21. Breezy.

Monday Night: A 20 percent chance of snow. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 15.

Tuesday: Mostly cloudy, with a high near 25.

SMC board to consider finalist for president

SUBMITTED

DOWAGIAC — The SMC Board of Trustees will hold a special public meeting on December 29, 2025, at 10 a.m. in Room 2112 of the David C. Briegel Building to consider the candidacy of Dr. Klint Pleasant of Rochester Hills for the position of president.

Dr. Pleasant interviewed with the search committee earlier this year and with the Board in a public setting on December 9. Dr. Pleasant also submitted other materials as part of the college's national search for president that commenced last May.

Dr. Pleasant currently serves as the Senior Vice President and Special Assistant to the President, as well as the Head Men's Basketball Coach, at Rochester Christian University in Rochester Hills, Michigan. Pleasant holds a Doctor of Education from Lipscomb University, and his administrative duties since 2017 have included strategic planning, enrollment and fundraising.

PLEASANT

Southwestern Michigan College students named to honor rolls

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

DOWAGIAC — Southwestern Michigan College named 68 students to the President's List for the Fall 2025 semester.

Students on the President's List must earn a perfect 4.0 grade-point average (GPA) on a 4.0 scale while carrying a full study load of at least 12 credits.

The 193 students making the Dean's List achieved at least a 3.5 GPA on a 4.0 scale while carrying a full study load.

President's List

Georgia, Evans, Chloe Anderson

Indiana

Hebron
Breanna Bara

Michigan

Ann Arbor
Bryce Rose

Baroda
Margaret Arney

Benton Harbor
Cole Kilboy
Karma Phillips
Angel Hernandez

Berrien Center
Ryleigh Hunsberger

Berrien Springs
Elena Atencio

Bridgman
Grace Swenson

Buchanan
Bodie Bryans, Katie Zebell, Kaitlin Ferrell

Cassopolis
Marissa Imperio, Kasie Blad, Megan Franks

Constantine
Abraham Furrer, Keaton Smith, Jack Williams

Decatur
Jessica Conwell

Delton
Lillian Lester

Dowagiac
Michael Burks, Kayla Patzer, Frances Getz, Nevaeh Heminger, Kristopher Goodwin, Merrill Adams

Eau Claire
Elijah Kaler

Edwardsburg
Blanca Clothier, Kaylee Seabolt, Hayden Hiemstra, Mariah Dickens-Mantey, Olivia Bachmann

Galien
Silas Dobson

Grand Rapids
Mary Fradette

Hartford
Kaylee Bradshaw, Ivan Lopez

Jones
Meah Evans

Kalamazoo
Lucy Lester, Dylan McLean

Lawrence
Sarah Remelts, Gwendolyn Sexton

Marcellus
Dakoda Simon, Kyla Sparks, Alivia Colley

Niles
Liz Van DePutte, Kaylei Colls, Marietta Smith, Aiyana Rainwater, Easton Loucks, Cairra Stephens, Grace Layman, Jordan Wieferich, Jenna McGann, Aiden Fawcett, Seirra Holden, Travis Danelski

Paw Paw
Aden Webber, Amelia Hurst

Plainwell
Emily King

Port Huron
Noelle Park

Reading
Lacey Weaver

Stevensville
Tyler Hahn

Union
Austin McCreary

Vandalia
Ariel Smith, Atyanna Alford

Watervliet
Erika Gunn, Courtney Van Lente

Dean's List

Illinois

Calumet City
Patience Miller

Flossmoor
Jovohn Ratliff

Indiana

Claypool
Wyatt Prater

Elkhart
Brady Burkhart, Jose Mares, Keegan Parsons

Granger
Clayton Johanson, Logan Switek

LaPorte
Emma Hull

Mishawaka
Trinity Dale

Osceola
Seth Stoltzfus

South Bend
Kalen Allen, Caitlin Dingess

Walkerton
Gregory Collins

Winamac
Peyton Attinger

Michigan

Bangor
Adrian Hernandez, Patricia Przybocki, Julian Pullins, Ethan Woger-Burrows

Benton Harbor
Javon Hill, Amber Voit

Berrien Center
Zach Bennett

Berrien Springs
Brianna Hernandez, Hindra Pawa, Karlie Phillips, Audrey Wolf

Bridgman
Livvie Forbear

Brownstown
Cooper Roberts

Buchanan
Hayden Bauer, Teagan Cords, Jimmy Powers, Sidney Smith, Samuel Stellmach, Addy Wetzel, Madeline Young

Cassopolis
Gavin Anderson, Ryli Burks, Emily Carlisle, Jacqueline Findlay, Kirsten Franks, Devyn Garcia, Jamie Howard, Chloe Itimu, Te'yana Lee, Brayden Rice, Sam Swick, Savannah Watson, Austin West, Taylor Thomson

Coloma
Jamie Dobson

Constantine
Sophia Kurnyak

Decatur
Carlee Cady, Justin Hemenway, Sophie Lutz, Dulce Pena, Diego Sardeneta, Mattalynn Stull

Detroit
Daytona Tate Hancock

Dowagiac
Elizabeth Bale, Jewel Burgess-Stambaugh, Aubrey Busby, Collin Cozadd, Harli Henslee, Hunter Hurley, Zach Kroepel, Sammy Linn, Kaylyn Moore, Ally Olson, Kaity Ownby, Ariel Peters, Thomas Pierce, Owen Saylor, Carson Shugars, Jonathan Silva, Adam West, Zach Wiggins

Eau Claire
Arly Fitzgerald

Edwardsburg
Teearah Ayodo, Daniel Brooks, Arun Buck, Titus Devlin, Nicklus Fedder, Brailey Fowler, Carter Houseworth, Laila Johnson, Nevaeh Jones, John Luebcke, Julia Matthews, Cailey Myers, Gracie Oleson, Zach Shears, Justina Stinnett, Mara Vanburen, Lilly Waggoner, Jordan Walls, Bryce Wegner, Gavin Ziska

Fennville
Destiney Hensley

Galien
Youhana Alshahhaf, Brooke Strefling, Ben Tripp, Katelyn Young

Gobles
Chris Witt

Hartford
Ginessa Aguirre, Kaylie Axsom, Sianelli Rodriguez, Valeria Torres, Lillian Wolf

Jones
Lillian Haskett

Kalamazoo
Meg Laforge, Zachary Noggle

Lawton
Mikayla Reynolds

Marcellus
Benjamin Adams, Shannon Durden, Talan Hiemstra, Kaden Sparks, Quinton Tone, Charlotte Welburn

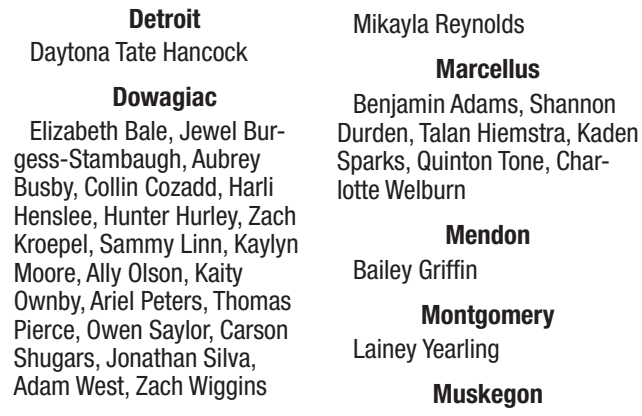
Mendon
Bailey Griffin

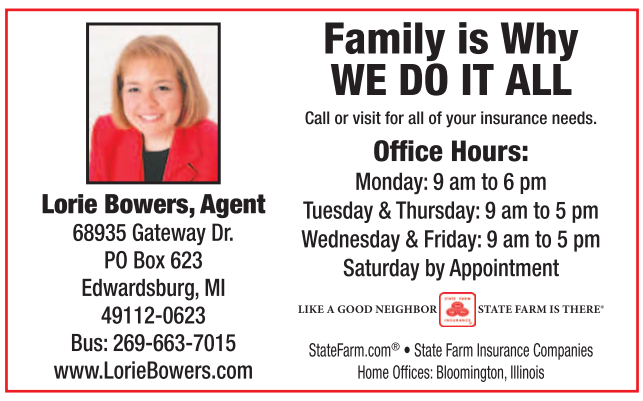
Montgomery
Lainey Yearling

Muskegon
Alex Facundo

New Buffalo
Dallas Kirchman

Niles
Sophia Bachman, Haley Baker, Brian Bookout, Selena Brown, John Bullard, India Caulder, Caleb Christian, Tysen Custard, Samantha Daus, Tucker Dierlam, Megan Groat, Samuel Herbster, Sophia Hojara, Alex Horvath, Makayla Jackmovich, Priscilla Lovison, Casey Macon, Josslyn Maples, Leah Martin, Malakai McGee, Kaleb McCombs

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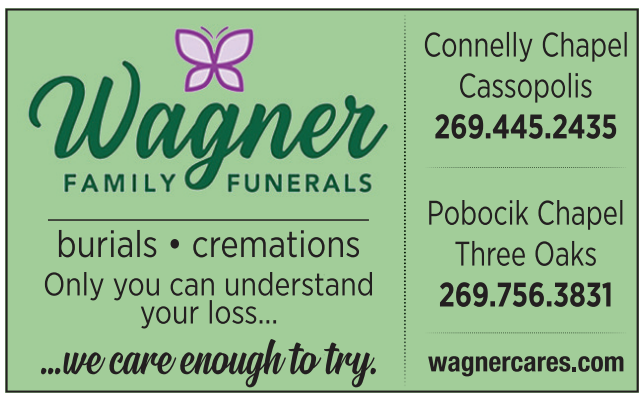

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LEADER PUBLICATIONS

ADMINISTRATIVE
Publisher
Rich Cains
219-455-2349
rich.cains@leaderpub.com

CUSTOMER SERVICE & DISTRIBUTION
Amy Glover
(269-687-7717
amy.glover@leaderpub.com

EDITORIAL
MANAGING EDITOR
Maxwell Harden
231-750-5776
max.harden@leaderpub.com

ADVERTISING
Dennis Hinsey
269-362-1525
dennis.hinsey@leaderpub.com

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Don Campbell / HP staff

The 2025 Veteran Service Provider of the Year award is pictured above, which was recently given to Maureen Adams, director of Berrien County Veteran Services.

ADAMS

From page A1

administration and the (National) Cemetery Administration. And even though they're all under the VA, they don't talk together very well.

Something like tinnitus at 10 percent will get them in the door for VA health care.

So people should talk to you, even if they don't believe they qualify for benefits?

Yes. One gal didn't apply for benefits because she said she wasn't married to (the veteran) when he was in the service and when he died, she just assumed she wasn't eligible. She thought she had to be married to him when he was in (the service), not later in life.

She ended up getting a big retro(active) check and this gal, she was of retirement age but she was still working because she couldn't afford to live. This changed her life. She had no idea. And a lot of veterans feel that way.

Another guy, who passed away last year, filed for bladder cancer, which was not a presumptive condition for Agent Orange, so they denied it. Then years later, they added bladder cancer. The law allowed the VA to take him back to the date of his original claim, so he got the biggest retro check I ever helped somebody get. I believe it was around $465,000.

It's so exciting when that happens. It changed his life. He was such a sweet gentleman. He'd always come in and bring me two apple crullers and a hot chocolate whenever he was in town to thank me for helping him.

One lady would come in and say, "My husband didn't get anything and he deserved it." I was Lee (Lull)'s assistant at the time and I said, "Why don't I look your husband up?"

So I looked him up and he had been aboard a ship in Vietnam and he did, in fact, qualify. He had applied in 2015 and died in 2016. When they added the Blue Water Act (in 2019), she didn't know to come in.

What is the Blue Water Act?

It used to be you had to have one foot on the ground in Vietnam (to qualify for compensation), so if you were on a ship, you didn't get any exposure rights because you didn't have a foot on the ground. They changed the law to include if you were within 13 nautical miles of Vietnam.

When he applied, that was not in effect. After he died and they changed the law, now he became eligible. She got the widow's pension and she got retro pay back to the time of his death.

The VA changes things all the time. They're doing these studies and they may add conditions later, so it's good to check. I don't want to make it sound like everybody gets (compensation) and it's just sitting here waiting. You do have to qualify.

It sounds like you've helped a lot of people.

That's the best part. I love my job.

Of the programs you've added, which one are you the most proud of?

The VIBE (Veterans In Berrien Engage) channel. Being able to communicate with veterans so they know what's going on in our area. We didn't have a good way to tell them things like the opportunities that are available to them.

We had a roofing company last year that wanted to give away a roof to a veteran or first responder. They told me they had three or seven applications, even though they had social media and they were advertising. We put it out over the VIBE channel and they had over 70 applications.

How does the VIBE channel work?

They just need to register with our office either an email address or a (number that can receive texts). And when we have news to share, we push it out. The VIBE channel has been super successful because everybody has a phone in their hand these days. We have 1,600 people registered to the VIBE channel today. And still, we have 8,000 veterans in our county, so we still have a long way to go. It's not just for veterans, but for the community, too. You may not be a veteran, but if you know a veteran you want to share information with, you should be signing up.

How did you start working for the office?

My neighbor worked as an assistant in this office and she was retiring and she kept telling me, "When I retire, you're going to take care of my veterans."

I was like, "I'm good. I like my job." I just had a part-time job doing payroll. My husband was like, "Just go on the interview so she quits talking to you about it." I went on the interview. Lee Lull was the director at the time.

I was hired and my first day was the day of the shooting at the courthouse. I had come in. I did my initial stuff. I had an appointment in the afternoon over at the courthouse to get my training. I was at the courthouse and left the courthouse and came back here and my sister called me and said, "Are you OK?"

I said, "I'm fine."

She said, "Didn't you start your job today?"

I said, "Yes, I did."

She's like, "There's a shooting at the courthouse."

I said, "I just left the courthouse four minutes ago. I assure you there's no shooting."

She's like, "It's on the news."

Lee and I looked and we're like, "Oh my goodness."

I literally left, probably moments before, if not as that was going on. So that was my first day at work. It's an easy day to remember for all the wrong reasons.

Contact: lwrege@TheHP.com, 932-0361, Twitter: @HPWrege

Janice Thompson

April 6, 1950 – December 21, 2025

Janice Ann Thompson (née Rothrock), age 75, passed away peacefully on December 21, 2025, in Dowagiac, Michigan.

Born on April 6, 1950, in South Bend, Indiana, Janice was the daughter of Imogene and Marion "Rocky" Rothrock. She graduated from Brandywine High School in 1968 and went on to earn an Associate's Degree from Southwestern Michigan College.

Her life was rooted in family, faith, and a deep love for nature and community. Janice was a devoted mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, friend, and coworker. Her days were filled with acts of kindness – whether it was preparing a home-cooked meal or dessert for someone in need, or watching over grandchildren or other children. Her love knew no bounds as she effortlessly cared for and loved her grandchildren and the children of many family and friends. She showered all of them with love, kindness and care. She attended school programs and sports events, and always offered a helping hand to loved ones. Her presence was a constant source of comfort and support to those around her.

She found spiritual grounding as a member of Holy Maternity Catholic Church in Dowagiac, where her faith remained an important part of her life.

Jan's love for the outdoors was evident in her beautifully tended yard that bloomed with special plants and flowers. Each year she thoughtfully planted blooms that matched the wedding colors of her children's weddings – a living tribute to their milestones. Her passion for birds made her backyard a haven for feathered visitors; she delighted in identifying them and sharing her knowledge with others.

A lifelong sports enthusiast, Jan rarely missed a game. Whether it meant attending two or three grandchildren's events in one day or cheering from home with Notre Dame football on the television every Saturday, she brought unwavering energy and enthusiasm to every match.

Books were another cherished part of her life – she read daily to her grandchildren and often stayed up late immersed in novels of her own. To many who knew and loved her, she was affectionately known as "Maw Jan" – a title she wore with pride. So much so that it adorned her signature license plate: "Maw Jan." It symbolized not only her role within the family but also the warmth and joy she brought into every room she entered.

Janice is survived by her siblings: Warren Rothrock, Margaret Freeman, Mary Rothrock, David (Betty) Rothrock, and Amy Gaynor; her children: daughter Anne Schaap (fiancé Allen Eisenhart), sons Matt (Jamie) Ferry, Mark (Beth) Ferry, and Miles (Ashley) Ferry; grandchildren: Brooke, Cody, Caleb, Matt, Dylan, Isabelle, Garrett, Greta, Madison and Lincoln; as well as many nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews who will carry forward her legacy of love and generosity.

She was preceded in death by her parents Imogene and Marion "Rocky" Rothrock and by her brother James Rothrock.

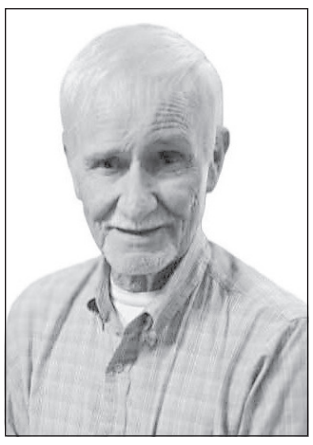
Janice Ann Thompson's life was one of quiet strength and boundless giving. May her memory bring comfort to all who knew her.

A funeral will be held at Halbritter-Wickens; 615 E. Main St, Niles, Michigan on December 26, 2025, at 11:00 AM. Visitation will be at 10:00 AM with funeral service to follow at 11:00 AM. Burial will take place immediately following services after a procession at Mission Hills Memorial and Crematory Gardens, Niles, Michigan. Janice's wishes are for living plants for the services.

Any monetary donations can be forwarded to the Ronald McDonald House Charities; 610 N. Michigan St. South Bend, IN 46601.

Robert 'Sonny' Duffel

June 10, 1943 – December 11, 2025



Robert "Sonny" Wayne Duffel, 82, of Niles, Michigan, formerly of Berrien Springs, MI. went home to be with Jesus on December 11, 2025 in South Bend, Indiana.

Sonny was born in Searcy, Arkansas on June 10, 1943 to the late Robert and Estelle (Wilson) Duffel. He grew up in Searcy, AR where he met Dathel Louise Baker, the love of his life and they were married on January 12, 1961. They started their family and in 1968, moved to Michigan and raised five children.

Sonny worked at Buchanan Steel, the former Cold Storage in Berrien Springs, Frank Farms in Berrien Center and ultimately retired from Crowe LLC (formerly Crowe-Chizek, LLC) in South Bend, Indiana after 23 years as security.

Sonny overcame many adversities in his youth that instilled a strong work ethic. After completing the 4th grade, he worked in the cotton fields of Arkansas to earn money for his family to survive after the passing of his father. He always felt like he was running the race of life against the wind. In his young adult years, grit and determination were fundamental stepping stones that compelled him to build a better tomorrow and raise his own family.

He was a member of the Berrien Springs Jaycees and carried the nickname "Catfish" as pitcher on the slow-pitch softball team. He also coached Berrien Springs Pee Wee League baseball and football.

Sonny's main hobby was his lawn. He took great pride in its pristine appearance of the rich deep green color, perfect stripes and no weeds. During the fall, leaves were his enemy!

He loved to laugh and found many opportunities for humor in life. This is a characteristic he instilled in his children along with a strong work ethic. He was quick witted with keen common sense learned through the hard-knocks of life. Sonny loved wood working and was creative in his ability to make whatever he envisioned. He especially enjoyed making wooden benches for his grandchildren.

He was never late to an appointment, event or family gathering. He was the first to arrive and first to leave.

His favorite K9 companion Buttercup found great comfort and love in his embrace.

Sonny is survived by his children Angela (William) Shembarger of Niles, MI; Sheila Engler of Palestine, TX; Bryan Duffel of Buchanan, MI; Tina (Terry) Woods of South Bend, IN; and Lanny (Denise) Duffel of Berrien Springs, MI. Nine grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren and two sisters Carolyn and Phyllis.

He is preceded in death by his wife of 63 years Dathel Duffel, his parents Robert and Estelle Duffel, his brother Jim Duffle and sister Martha.

A private graveside service will be held at a later date at Rosehill Cemetery in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Arrangements have been entrusted to Allred Funeral Home in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Death notices

Cleta Ann Caldwell, 83, passed away on December 15, 2025, in Niles, Michigan. Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Raejaun Jones, 26, of South Bend passed away December 20, 2025. Funeral services will be December 29th at 4pm at Brown Funeral Home with visitation beginning at 2pm. Arrangements by Brown Funeral Home, Niles.

Wyvonne Johnson, 87, Niles, MI passed away December 12, 2025. Arrangements provided by Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services. Services on December 30, 2025, 2:00pm at Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Rita Turner

November 20, 1933 – December 20, 2025

Rita Marlene Turner peacefully entered the gates of Heaven and was reunited with her beloved husband, Jack, on Saturday, December 20, 2025, at her home, surrounded by family at her side.

Rita was the sweetest soul, always doing her best to be a devoted and supportive wife, a caring and loving mother, and a funny and encouraging grandmother. She lived life fully and lovingly, bringing laughter to many, and she will be fondly remembered by all who knew her.

Born on November 20, 1933, to Harry H. and Florence Snyder (Yeagley), Rita's life was rooted in family, friendship, and simple joys. As a young girl, she loved spending time with her family and skating at the roller rink with friends – where fate stepped in and she met the love of her life, Jack. Their story began there, leading to their marriage on July 16, 1960, and a beautiful sixty-five years spent side by side, full of love, laughter, and shared memories.

Rita dedicated many years to her professional life, working at Citizen's National Bank in Bryan, Ohio, before moving to Niles, Michigan, where she continued her career at Kent Bank. She later completed her working years at CNC Products. Retirement never slowed her down, though – she found great joy as a beloved Avon representative, where she did far more than sell products. Rita built genuine relationships, shared kind conversations, and spread her joy and warmth to everyone she met, often leaving customers smiling long after she left their door.

Family was always Rita's greatest priority. After settling in Bryan, Ohio, she and Jack grew their family from two to five with the arrival of Jacqueline, Patrick, and Bradley. Rita was a devoted and encouraging mother – cheering proudly as Jacqueline twirled her baton, standing steadfast beside Patrick as he served in the Air Force, and enthusiastically supporting Bradley as he wrestled his way through school. That same unwavering encouragement continued as she lovingly supported her grandchildren in their academics, activities, and dreams.

Rita was a sensitive soul with a gift for making others laugh and a heart that always put the needs of others before her own. She was a constant listening ear, a gentle encourager, and a comforting presence. Her absence leaves an immeasurable void for those who remain, but her kindness, laughter, and love will continue to live on in the countless lives she touched.

Rita is survived by her children, Jacqueline (Dave), Patrick (April), and Bradley (Heidi); grandchildren, Angie (Josh), Heather, Kelsey (Sam), Erica (Chris), Haley (Josh), Sean (Madeline), Raegan, and Ashlynn (Austin); great grandchildren, Cagney, Ky, Lauren, Mali, Rune, Nova, Leah, Summer, Madeline, Henry, Noah, Ellie, and Kaitlyn; and her granddogs Bentley, Rigley, Nala, Kio, Kinley, Mabel, Duke, Hondo, Moby, Ranger, and Maisie. She was preceded in death by her parents, Harry and Florence Snyder; stepmother, Blanche Snyder; husband, Jack Turner; siblings Harry Jr., Robert Snyder; and her great granddaughter, April.

A private celebration of Rita's joyful life will be held at a later date, where we will honor and remember the many beautiful moments we shared. We will hold Rita in our hearts forever, thankful for the love and joy she shared so freely. Heaven shines a little brighter with her presence, and her spirit will always walk beside us, guiding us in the days to come.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services, Niles. Please share a memory or a message online: halbritterwickens.com. To order memorial trees or send flowers to the family in memory of Rita Marlene Turner, please visit our flower store.

Betty Schoetzow

November 11, 1929 – December 23, 2025

Betty J. Schoetzow, 96, of Dowagiac, passed away early Tuesday morning, December 23, 2025, at Beacon Kalamazoo Hospital, Kalamazoo, MI.

She was born on November 11, 1929, Eau Claire, MI, the daughter of Lyle and Blanche (Evans) Merrill. On May 15, 1948, Betty was united in marriage to Harry Schoetzow. Surviving are her two children, Carol Earl of Paw Paw and Ron (Diane) Schoetzow; six grandchildren, Doug Earl, Greg Earl, Mark (Kathy) Schoetzow, Brandi Schoetzow, Lisa (Doug) Romeo and Dean Kietzer; twelve great-grandchildren, McKenzie, Zachary, Jamie, Brandon, Alexis, Jayla, Autumn, Paul, Rachel, Ryan, Ava and C.J.; four great-great-grandchildren, Braxton, Isabella, Taron and Liam; three sisters, Louise Duffy, Mildred Miller and Marian Shemick; and numerous nieces and nephews. Preceding her in death were her husband of 48 years, Harry; parents; and several brothers and sisters.

Honoring Betty's wishes, cremation has taken place and her family will be celebrating her life privately. Inurnment will be in Missions Hills Memorial Gardens, Niles, MI. Arrangements were entrusted to Clark Chapel – Starks Family Funeral Homes, Dowagiac. To share a memory or offer condolences, please visit Betty's personalized webpage at www.clarkch.com.

Obituary policy

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OPINION

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It's more than OK for kids to be bored – it's good for them

By MARGARET MURRAY
Associate Professor of Public Communication and Culture Studies, University of Michigan-Dearborn (The Conversation)

THE CONVERSATION

Boredom is a common part of life, across time and around the world. That's because boredom serves a useful purpose: It motivates people to pursue new goals and challenges.

I'm a professor who studies communication and culture. I am currently writing a book about modern parenting, and I've noticed that many parents try to help their kids avoid boredom. They might see it as a negative emotion that they don't want their children to experience. Or they might steer them into doing something that they see as more productive.

There are various reasons they want to prevent their children from being bored. Many parents are busy with work. They're stressed about money, child care responsibilities and managing other parts of daily life. Making sure a child is occupied with a game, a TV show or an arts and crafts project at home can help parents work uninterrupted, or make dinner, without their children complaining that they are bored.

Parents may also feel pressure for their children to succeed, whether that means getting admitted to a selective school, or becoming a good athlete or an accomplished musician.

Children also spend less time playing freely outside and more time participating in structured activities than they did a few decades ago.

Easy access to screens has made it possible to avoid boredom more than ever before.

Many parents needed to put their children in front of screens throughout the pandemic to keep them occupied during work hours. More recently, some parents have reported feeling social pressure to use screens to keep children quiet in public spaces.

That is to say, there are various reasons why parents shy away from their kids being bored. But before striving to eliminate boredom completely, it's important to know the benefits of boredom.

Benefits of boredom

Although boredom feels bad to experience in the moment, it offers real benefits for personal growth.

Boredom is a signal that a change is needed, whether it be a change in scenery, activity or company. Psychologists have found that the experience of boredom can lead to discovering new goals and trying new activities.

Harvard public and nonprofit leadership professor Arthur Brooks has found that boredom is necessary for reflection. Downtime leaves room to ask the big questions in life and find meaning.

Children who are rarely bored could become adults who cannot cope with boredom. Boredom also offers a brain boost that can cultivate a child's innate curiosity and creativity.

Learning to manage boredom and other negative emotions is an important life skill. When children manage their own time, it can help them develop executive function, which includes the ability to set goals and make plans.

The benefits of boredom make sense from an evolutionary perspective. Boredom is extremely common. It affects all ages, genders and cultures, and teens are especially prone to boredom. Natural selection favors traits that offer a leg up, so it is unlikely that boredom would be so prevalent if it did not deliver some advantages.

Parents should be wary of treating boredom as a problem they must solve for their children. Psychologists have found that college students with overly involved parents suffer from more depression.

Other research shows that young children who were given screens to help them calm down were less equipped to regulate their emotions as they got older.

Boredom is uncomfortable

Tolerating boredom is a skill that many children resist learning or do not have the opportunity to develop. Even many adults would rather shock themselves with electricity than experience boredom.

It takes practice to learn how to handle boredom. Start with small doses of boredom and work up to longer stretches of unstructured time. Tips for parents include getting kids outside, suggesting a new game or recipe, or simply resting. Creating space for boredom means that there will be some stretches of time when nothing in particular is happening.

Younger children might need ideas for what they could do when bored. Parents do not need to play with them every time they are bored, but offering suggestions is helpful. Even five minutes of boredom is a good start for the youngest children.

Encouraging older children to solve the problem of boredom themselves is especially empowering. Let them know that boredom is a normal part of life even though it might feel unpleasant.

It gets easier

Children are adaptable.

As children get used to occasional boredom, it will take them longer to become bored in the future. People find life less boring once they regularly experience boredom.

Letting go of the obligation to keep children entertained could also help parents feel less stressed. Approximately 41 percent of parents in the U.S. said they "are so stressed they cannot function," and 48 percent reported that "most days their stress is completely overwhelming," according to a report from the U.S. surgeon general in 2024.

So the next time a kid complains, "I'm bored!" don't feel guilty or frustrated. Boredom is a healthy part of life. It prompts us to be self-directed, find new hobbies and take on new challenges.

Let children know that a little boredom isn't just OK – in fact, it's good for them.

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Funandrejs / Dreamstime / TNS

That's where Fried Pickle Dip from "The Ultimate Pickle Lover's Book" comes into play. While it's short-changing the book (and pickle lovers) to only highlight the recipe that mimics one of our favorite State Fair foods, it has the buzz factor that hosts and guests love.

4 quick dips for your festive party spreads

By NICOLE HVIDSTEN
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

For our extended family holiday gatherings, we've dispensed with the big meal and go all in on appetizers.

We've found that not only does it take the pressure off the host – everyone brings an appetizer or two – but it gives the day a more laid-back feel for guests, too. No need to rush over for a predetermined mealtime; just come when schedules allow and appetites are healthy.

While we do have vegetables and more substantial offerings on hand (pulled pork sliders are a favorite) for those making a day of it, we love to go all in on dips. Hot dips, cold dips, dessert dips – we have them all. Which is why "Dip In" by Sonali Shah had my full attention when it crossed my desk.

This year, I'm spicing up of-the-moment cottage cheese, turning a classic salad into a dip and reinventing an Italian sauce into an appetizer, all thanks to Shah's snacking sensibilities.

But what's a party without a wildcard?

That's where Fried Pickle Dip from "The Ultimate Pickle Lover's Book" comes into play. While it's short-changing the book (and pickle lovers) to only highlight the recipe that mimics one of our favorite State Fair foods, it has the buzz factor that hosts and guests love.

No worries if it's too late to invite these recipes to your holiday party, just remember the Super Bowl is only six weeks away.

Crunchy Chicken Caesar Dip

Serves 4 to 6.

Tailor this dip to suit your tastes. Don't like anchovies? Leave them out. Fancy extra bacon? Go for it. From "Dip In: 80 Delicious Dip Recipes for Entertaining, Snacking and Beyond," by Sonali Shah (Hamlyn, 2025).

For the croutons:
- 1 slice of sourdough bread, torn into small bite-size chunks
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

For the dip:
- 8 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 4 anchovies, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed or finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice, divided
- 1 cup shredded cooked chicken
- 2 celery sticks, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons capers, roughly chopped
- 4 tablespoons prepared crispy fried onions
- 2 strips cooked crispy bacon, roughly chopped (about 2 tablespoons)
- Handful of chives, chopped
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Lettuce cups, for serving

To make the croutons: Preheat oven to 400 degrees and line a baking sheet with parchment. Add the torn bread and drizzle over the olive oil, tossing to coat. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes, or until crispy, stirring the croutons halfway through. Set aside to cool.

To make the dip: Combine the mayonnaise, anchovies and garlic in a bowl, then stir in half the lemon juice. Once combined, add the chicken, celery and capers. Stir and taste for seasoning, adding a good grind of black pepper and more lemon juice if needed.

Just before serving, stir through the croutons and top the dip with the crispy fried onions, crispy bacon and chives. Serve with lettuce cups, like Little Gem.

Cottage Cheese and Salsa Macha

Serves 4.

Salsa macha originates in Veracruz, Mexico. While it's technically a salsa, it's a bit different as it's oil based. You can enjoy it on its own, but it's particularly delicious drizzled over something creamy like cottage cheese. Note: Use 2 dried chipotle chiles if guajillo chiles aren't available. Store leftovers in a jar in the refrigerator for up to 4 weeks. From "Dip In: 80 Delicious Dip Recipes for Entertaining, Snacking and Beyond," by Sonali Shah (Hamlyn, 2025).
- 7 ounces sunflower or vegetable oil
- 4 cloves garlic, peeled and smashed
- 2 tablespoons sesame seeds
- 2 tablespoons pumpkin seeds
- 2 tablespoons sunflower seeds
- 1/2 cup peanuts
- 2 ancho chiles, seeded and finely chopped
- 4 guajillo chiles, seeded and finely chopped (see Note)
- 1 tablespoon cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/4 cups cottage cheese
- Crispbreads or crunchy crackers, for serving
- Fresh vegetables, for serving

Pour oil into a medium-sized saucepan. Add the garlic and place over a medium-low heat. Just before it starts to pop, reduce the heat to a simmer, then cook for 2 to 3 minutes or until fragrant.

Stir in the sesame seeds, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, peanuts and chopped chiles, and continue to simmer for a further 5 minutes or until the seeds and nuts start to brown. Remove from heat, stir in the cider vinegar and salt, then leave to cool.

Once cool, scoop out the solids using a slotted spoon and add them to the bowl of a food processor. Blend until you have a chunky paste, then return mixture to the oil and stir to combine. Taste for seasoning.

When you're ready to serve, add the cottage cheese to your serving dish, then drizzle with 3 to 4 tablespoons of the salsa macha, or to taste. Serve with crispbreads and/or fresh vegetables.

Preserved Lemon Tonnato

Serves 4.

Tonnato is a classic Italian sauce typically served with veal in vitello tonnato, but it's really delicious as a standalone dip. Note: The addition of preserved lemon is a little twist that provides depth, but you can use 1 to 2 tablespoons lemon juice instead if you prefer. From "Dip In: 80 Delicious Dip Recipes for Entertaining, Snacking and Beyond," by Sonali Shah (Hamlyn, 2025).
- 2 (4-ounce) cans tuna in oil
- 2 preserved lemons, finely chopped and seeds discarded, plus 1 teaspoon of their brine (see Note)
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled
- 2 teaspoon capers
- 2 small shallots, peeled and roughly chopped
- 4 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Crostini, for serving
- Fresh vegetables, for serving

Empty the tuna and its oil into a food processor. Add the preserved lemons (or lemon juice), garlic, capers, shallots, mayonnaise and olive oil and blend until smooth. Taste and add salt if needed. Season with black pepper and serve with crostini and fresh vegetables.

Fried Pickle Dip

Serves 8.

This recipe takes all the best flavors and textures of fried pickles – the toasty coating, the creamy ranch dip and the tangy pickles – and transforms them into an irresistible dip. It pairs well with your favorite chips and crackers. Don't skip the chilling time, which allows the flavors to develop. From "The Ultimate Pickle Lover's Book," by Princess Gabbara and Kelly Jaggers (Simon & Schuster, 2025).
- 2 cups sour cream
- 4 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
- 1 (0.4-ounce) packet powdered ranch mix, such as Hidden Valley Ranch Restaurant-Style Dressing & Recipe Mix
- 2 tablespoons dill pickle brine
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives
- 1/2 teaspoon onion powder
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 1/4 cups finely chopped dill pickles
- 1 cup panko
- 5 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

To a large bowl, add sour cream and cream cheese. With a hand mixer, beat on low speed until mixture is just combined, about 30 seconds. Increase speed to medium and beat until mixture is smooth, about 2 minutes.

Add ranch powder, pickle brine, dill, chives, onion powder and garlic powder, and beat on low speed for 30 seconds, or until all spices are well blended. Add pickles and fold to mix. Cover and refrigerate for at least 4 hours.

Just before serving, prepare topping. In a medium bowl, combine panko and butter, and mix until evenly combined. Heat a 10-inch skillet over medium heat. Add panko mixture and cook, stirring often, until mixture is golden brown, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and set aside to cool.

Transfer dip to a serving dish and top with toasted panko. Serve immediately.

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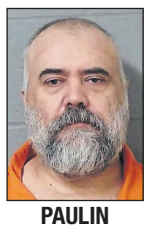
Dowagiac man gets probation for soliciting minor

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Publications Contributor

CASSOPOLIS — A Dowagiac man was sentenced to probation for solicitation of a minor Friday morning in Cass County Circuit Court.

Bryan Muril Paulin, 50, of Chestnut Street in Dowagiac, pleaded no contest to accosting children for immoral purposes and was sentenced to five years probation, credit for 100 days served and $3,848 in fines and costs. He must register as a sex offender.

The incidents occurred in August and September in Dowagiac when he communicated with who he thought was a 13-year-old girl.


PAULIN

Cass County Circuit Court Judge Mark Herman noted that Paulin was messaging with a decoy person who told him she was 13 years old. Paulin sent inappropriate photos to the person and asked for photos in return. When confronted by police, Paulin initially said his phone had been hacked but police found numerous photos of naked females on his phone.

"The defendant has been involved in highly disturbing activity that went on for weeks," Cass County Prosecutor Victor Fitz said. "… This is nothing new for him, he was convicted in 1991 as a juvenile of first degree criminal sexual conduct. This old dog continues his old tricks. I have no doubt he would have engaged with her if she had been an actual person."

Defense attorney Robert Drake spoke about the need to stay within what the courts and the legislature have intended because of the egregiousness of a defendant's conduct. He pointed out that Paulin has no prior record except his juvenile offense and had already served 100 days in jail.

"He's 50 years old, not in great health and is on disability," Drake added. "This was not a 13 year old child but a grown person posing as a child."

Judge Herman said that while the sentencing guidelines, which here were two to 17 months, are advisory, his hands were pretty much tied in what sentence he could impose. He noted that the two to 17 month range is considered an intermediate sanction cell and doesn't allow him to sentence Paulin to more jail or prison.

"You need to appreciate that," he told Paulin. "What you did here could have had serious consequences. If you had followed through and met the person, you would be going to prison for a long time."

Also Friday, the judge accepted one delayed sentence and postponed action on another until late March.

Timothy Harmon Ferguson, 54, of South Bend, had originally been charged with third offense drunk driving and will now see his charge be reduced to a misdemeanor second offense drunk driving conviction after completing a probationary period. The drunk driving incident occurred Sept. 28, 2024 in Edwardsburg.

Corey Darnell Brookins will now have to late March to pay off the rest of the past child support he still owes. He had owed over $10,000 but now owes just $1,475. If he can pay that off by March 27, the felony non support charge will be reduced to a misdemeanor.

Judge Herman warned Paulin that he could still go to prison if he violates his probation. "If you do violate your probation, don't be surprised if you end up going to prison," he said. "You have probationary terms now but if you violate it will be a long jail or prison sentence."

Detroit native Jim Daniels announced as 2025-26 Michigan Author Award winner

SUBMITTED

LANSING — Poet and writer Jim Daniels is the 2025-26 Michigan Author Award recipient, the Library of Michigan and Michigan Center for the Book announced today.

A native of Detroit, Daniels has authored 30 collections of poetry, seven collections of fiction and four produced screenplays. His most recent books include "An Ignorance of Trees: A Memoir in Essays," non-fiction, Cornerstone Press, 2025; "The Luck of the Fall," fiction, Michigan State University Press, 2023; and "The Human Engine at Dawn," Wolfson Press, 2022, and "Comment Card," Carnegie Mellon University Press, 2024, both poetry.

He has also edited or co-edited six anthologies of writing. He is a recipient of two fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and two from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. Four of his works have been honored by the Michigan Notable Books program: "Birth Marks," "Eight Mile High," "Rowing Inland," and "R E S P E C T: The Poetry of Detroit Music," co-edited by M.L. Liebler.

Daniels holds degrees from Alma College and Bowling Green State University. He was previously on the faculty of the creative writing program at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh from 1981 to 2021. He also taught in the Antioch University-Los Angeles low-residency master of fine arts program from 2007 to 2021. Most recently, Daniels has served as a faculty member for the low-residency master of fine arts program at Alma College.

"Jim Daniels is an incredibly prolific writer," said State Librarian Randy Riley, "His diverse collection of literary works offers endless doorways into the lives and experiences shared by everyday Michiganders."

The Michigan Author Award is a lifetime achievement award that celebrates the collective career of a Michigan author. Over the years a diverse collection of writers working in a variety of genres and styles have been recognized. Recent recipients include Anne-Marie Oomen, Michael Zadoorian, Bonnie Jo Campbell, Mitch Albom, Christopher Paul Curtis and Beverly Jenkins. Find a complete list of past honorees on the Michigan Author Award page.

The Library of Michigan and Michigan Center for the Book will honor Daniels at a future event. Details will be announced once they have been finalized.

For more information or questions about the Michigan Author Award, please contact the Library of Michigan at (517)335-1477, visit www.Michigan.gov/MCFB, or email Librarian@Michigan.gov.

Niles man gets probation for pipe attack

By DEBRA HAIGHT
For Leader Publications

NILES — A Niles man who attacked someone with a pipe was sentenced to probation Monday in Berrien County Trial Court at the Niles courthouse. He was one of seven area residents sentenced Monday.

Jonathan Dekraker, 22, of Niles, pleaded guilty to felonious assault and was sentenced to two years probation, 150 days in jail with credit for 39 days served and $598 in fines and costs. He must complete the Tri-Cap probation program and can be released from jail to Tri-Cap when a bed is available.

DEKRAKER

The incident occurred Oct. 2 in Niles when he hit another person with a pipe.

Assistant Prosecutor Myrene Koch noted that the victim suffered injuries from being hit in the head multiple times by Dekraker.

Defense attorney Mark Donnelly noted that Dekraker had a bad childhood of abuse and his mother spending time in prison. Donnelly noted that his client has not had stable housing in the past and had been in and out of trouble. He noted that Dekraker is okay when he's taking his prescriptions but gets in trouble when he isn't.

Dekraker acknowledged that his past efforts on probation hadn't been successful but said he's willing to put in the work to change his life.

Berrien County Trial Court Judge Gordon Hosbein said he didn't find Dekraker unredeemable and noted that the victim in this case wants Dekraker to get help for his substance abuse and mental health problems.

In another case, an Eau Claire man was given probation for a domestic violence incident where he chased his son with an ax.

Craig Reynolds, 59, of Eau Claire, pleaded guilty to second offense domestic violence and was sentenced to two years probation in mental health court, 90 days in jail with credit for three days served and $525 in fines and costs. The jail term was delayed to the end of his probation and could be suspended if he's successful.

The incident occurred Sept. 28 in Eau Claire when he chased his son with an ax.

Defense attorney Stephanie Teeple said that her client acknowledged his methamphetamine drug addiction and has enrolled himself in Riverwood for counseling. "He acknowledges that this entire debacle is his fault," she said. "He was clean for 22 months when he was on probation and then relapsed in July."

"I'm an addict and I'm not proud of it," Reynolds said. "I learned from my relapse, I realized how bad it was damaging me. I want to apologize to my son and my two other grown children … I don't want to let anyone down. This is the first time in my life that I feel good and happy. I'm truly sorry for everything I've done."

Reynolds said his addiction had damaged his health both mentally and physically and he's trying to repair his relationships with his children. He said this will be the first time in several years that he will spend Christmas with his grandchildren.

Judge Hosbein thanked Reynolds for his comments but said he has to live and act and not just talk about what he wants to do. "Sobriety to me is not a goal, it is a process day to day," he said. "Trust the process of sobriety."

In other sentencings:

Jonathan Hoffman, 21, of Indiana, pleaded guilty to carrying a concealed weapon and was sentenced to 18 months probation under the Holmes Youthful Training Act, credit for one day served and $598 in fines and costs. The incident occurred Sept. 14 in Niles Township. The conviction will be kept off his record if he is successful on probation.

Elijah McDowell, 23, of Berrien Springs, pleaded guilty to resisting and obstructing police and was sentenced to credit for 15 days served and $500 in fines and costs. The incident occurred Sept. 11 in Oronoko Township.

Jiovanny Morales, 22, of Niles, pleaded guilty to possession of brass knuckles and careless discharge of a firearm and was sentenced to two years probation under the Holmes Youthful Training Act, credit for one day served and $666 in fines and costs. The incident occurred in 2021 in Niles. The conviction will be kept off his record if he's successful on probation.

Cynthia Swisher, 62, of Niles, pleaded guilty to possession of methamphetamine and was sentenced to two years probation, credit for 59 days served and $658 in fines and costs. The incident occurred Nov. 25 in Niles.

Brandon Willard, 31, of Niles, pleaded guilty to second offense use of meth and was sentenced to credit for one day served and $718 in fines, costs and restitution. The incident occurred May 22 in Niles.

Group appeals court order upholding marijuana wholesale tax

By THE DETROIT NEWS (TNS)

The Michigan Cannabis Industry Association on Tuesday appealed a lower court ruling that upheld the imposition of a new 24 percent wholesale tax on marijuana sales.

The controversial tax is set to take effect Jan. 1, but the marijuana association has asked the Michigan Court of Appeals to take up the case immediately, preferably before New Year's Day.

"The 24 percent wholesale tax violates the will of the voters who approved the 2018 citizen ballot initiative on cannabis, and we will not back down from fighting for the will of the people in court," said Rose Tantraphol, a spokeswoman for the association.

The wholesale tax, which is expected to bring in about $420 million annually, is a key element of a plan meant to increase revenue for roads – one that was agreed to in October by the Republican-led House, the Democratic-led Senate and Democratic Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

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Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications

Courtney and Katy Young have officially taken over as the owners and operators of the historic Lakeview Inn in Sister Lakes.

New beginnings

Longtime employees purchase Lakeview Inn

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

DOWAGIAC — A popular Sister Lakes restaurant has new owners who are no strangers to staff and customers alike.

A lifelong dream has become a reality for Courtney and Katy Young, who have officially taken over as the owners and operators of the historic Lakeview Inn in Sister Lakes.

Courtney, a Dowagiac native and former Miss Dowagiac, began her journey at the restaurant 12 years ago as a server and rose to the role of general manager. Katy, originally from Benton Harbor, has spent more than 15 years with the restaurant, rising to the role of head chef.

The couple met while working at the inn and when the opportunity arose to purchase the place where their story began, the previous owner Eric Fudala worked with them to help realize their dream.

"[Eric] is a very good guy, and he was patient with us through the process," Courtney said. "He knew that we wanted to eventually buy, and he knew he would eventually want to sell and we weren't quite ready. We finally got to a point where we were all ready for that transition."

From cooking and dishwashing to managing staff, they bring extensive knowledge of the ins-and-outs of the business to their new roles.

"Knowing how to work every position in the restaurant prepared us for ownership. We've known our customers for years," Courtney said. "We have amazing employees, many of whom have been with us for years. I can step in for dishwashing, cooking, or bar backing to see if there is anything I can do to make things run more smoothly. Since I've been the general manager for seven years, it's effectively business as usual. We opened last weekend and it felt just like being at work, except now we own it. It feels surreal."

Originally built in 1921, the restaurant has served the Sister Lakes community and beyond for generations. As the Youngs begin their journey as owners, they plan to maintain beloved traditions like live music and karaoke while expanding their reach into the catering and venue markets so that the Lakeview Inn remains a cornerstone of Sister Lakes for generations to come.

"We have amazing customers that have been coming here for years," Courtney said. "There are customers that still come in from 12 years ago – when their kids were tiny toddlers and now they're teenagers – and they're still coming up to the lake. They look forward to all those things, the traditions."

The Youngs said the business would not be what it is today without its loyal staff.

"They're such an important asset here," Courtney said. "We get compliments on them all the time and how they're just so welcoming. They know your name and your sandwich order before you even sit down because you've ordered it that way for years. I think what really makes us special is just having that community support it. When you meet all of our customers and our employees, you feel welcome here."

With the next chapter of their story set to begin, the Youngs encourage the next generation of entrepreneurs to chase their dreams.

"It's hard work, but the payoff of having so much support, having people love what you're doing and bringing a place for everybody to come together honestly outweighs any work you put into it," Katy said. "It becomes a way of life, a lifestyle of being dedicated to keeping something in the community that everybody has so much emotion and support for. It honestly brings me to tears – it's still so surreal but it's a roller coaster worth investing in as long as you have the passion, the heart and are willing to do the work."

SWMI housing market sales and inventory drop

Average selling prices increase compared to '24

By PMG STAFF

ST. JOSEPH — The Southwest Michigan housing market experienced a drop in sales and inventory of houses for sale in November compared to last year's levels.

According to a report from the Southwestern Michigan Association of Realtors Association, the average selling prices increased by double digits over prices from a year ago.

"Selling prices continued to climb year-over-year in November for the last four years," Southwestern Michigan Association of Realtors Association Executive Luke Jeffries said in the report.

The inventory of houses for sale fell 6 percent from the previous year's level. This reduction in the supply level resulted in a 5.1-month supply, down from 5.7 months at the end of October.

"The number of houses sold in November decreased 2 percent from November 2024," Jeffries said. "Year-to-date, sales have increased 3 percent."

The average selling price in November 2025 rose 16 percent to $472,774 from $407,689 in November 2024. Year-to-date, in 2025, the average selling price has grown 14 percent to $431,024 from $377,769.

The median selling price in November 2025 was $289,000, an increase of 8 percent from $267,000 in November 2024. Year-to-date, the median selling price increased by 8 percent.

The Freddie Mac mortgage rate in November increased to 6.23, up from 6.17 in October for a 30-year conventional mortgage. A year ago, the rate was 7.22.

The total dollar volume in November 2025 increased by 13 percent compared to November of last year. The year-to-date total dollar volume in 2025 grew by 18 percent.

The number of bank-owned or foreclosed homes as a percentage of all transactions in Southwest Michigan rose to 3 percent from 2 percent in October. There were seven houses included in the total transactions. The previous lowest percentage was zero percent in November 2022, and the highest was 36 percent in November 2010.

Across the country

Existing-home sales increased by 0.5 percent in November, according to the National Association of Realtors existing-home sales report.

Month-over-month sales increased in the Northeast and South, showed no change in the West, and fell in the Midwest. Year-over-year sales showed no change in the Northeast and South and decreased in the Midwest and West.

"Existing-home sales increased for the third straight month due to lower mortgage rates this autumn," NAR Chief Economist Lawrence Yun said. "However, inventory growth is beginning to stall. With distressed property sales at historic lows and housing wealth at an all-time high, homeowners are in no rush to list their properties during the winter months."

Total existing-home sales increased 0.5 percent month-over-month to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4.13 million. To date, the year-over-year sales have decreased one percent.

"Wage growth is outpacing home price gains, which improves housing affordability," Yun said. "Still, future affordability could be hampered if housing supply fails to keep pace with demand. As has been the case throughout the year, single-family home sales outperformed condominium sales in November. The typical price of a sold condo was 13.5 percent lower than the typical price of a single-family home. However, the purchase price does not include the condominium association fees, which are rising and making these purchases more expensive."

The median existing-home price for all housing types in November was $409,200, up 1.2 percent from one year ago, $404,400. This was the 29th consecutive month of year-over-year price increases.

In the Midwest, existing-home sales decreased 2 percent month-over-month to an annual rate of 970,000, down 3 percent year-over year. The median price in the Midwest was $319,400, up 5.8 percent from November 2024.

First-time buyers were responsible for 30 percent of sales in November, down from 32 percent last month.

The total housing inventory registered at the end of November was 1.43 million units, down 5.9 percent from October and up 7.5 percent from November 2024. Unsold inventory sits at a 4.2-month supply, down from 4.4 months in October and up from 3.8 months in November 2024.

DOUGAN'S

From page A1

team spent two months bringing the space back to life. Hampton's husband, Gary, took the lead on repairs and fixing up the building, while the team deep-cleaned the kitchen, updated the lighting and added personal home decorations to create a bright, inviting atmosphere.

Despite being retired for six years and feeling like "rookies" in the restaurant industry, the Hamptons felt driven to team with Dougan-Kener to create a high-quality dining experience that stands apart from typical fast-food chains.

Hampton said that Wendy Cowan leads the kitchen with Gary Hampton and Ben Milby, while Dougan-Kener brings her own restaurant background to the team. The menu is a tribute to the past, featuring scratch-made comfort foods like biscuits and gravy, hand-patted burgers and country fried steak. Dougan's also offers a variety of breakfast items and dinners.

The restaurant aims to provide a high-quality, "elevated" dining experience that stands apart from typical fast-food chains.

"If you want fast food, you go to McDonald's, Taco Bell, or Burger King," Hampton said. "I think we have a really nice, clean, lit-up establishment. We are looking forward to having a good day and a good year."

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Sports

Tanya Hagen / For Leader Publications

The Niles boys basketball team defeated Mishawaka 69-53 Tuesday on the road.

Niles boys take down Mishawaka 69-53

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

MISHAWAKA, Ind. — The Niles boys basketball team closed out 2025 in winning fashion on Tuesday.

The Vikings defeated Mishawaka 69-53 on the road.

Brenden Olsen stuffed the staff sheet with 19 points, seven rebounds and five blocks and Brayden Favors scored 17 pts and Derrick Hill had 12 points.

"We had a good second half on both ends of the floor," said Niles coach Mark Haase. "We were able to open up a close game."

The Vikings (5-4) host St. Joseph at 7 p.m. Monday, Jan. 5.

Short-handed Texas, Michigan's bowl foe, going through program changes too

By ANGELIQUE S. CHENGELIS
The Detroit News (TNS)

The Michigan and Texas football teams are heading to Florida to continue preparing for the Citrus Bowl on New Year's Eve, and both will look a bit different than they did at the end of the regular season.

Michigan is clearly the program in a state of chaos, its head coach, Sherrone Moore, fired on Dec. 10 because of an inappropriate relationship with a staff member. The search for a new head coach is ongoing, but interim head coach Biff Poggi, who had been associate head coach, is leading the team into the bowl game.

There's also the usual end-of-season attrition with players opting out. Texas coach Steve Sarkisian told reporters earlier this week he will have 65 players in Orlando, as some of the Longhorns' top players, like linebacker Anthony Hill Jr. and defensive back Michael Taaffe, have opted out among nine who have made their NFL draft intentions known. Michigan will be without senior edge Derrick Moore, edge/linebacker Jaishawn Barham and starting left guard Gio El-Hadi.

But based on a conversation Poggi had on a Texas podcast that also featured former Texas head coach Mack Brown as a co-host, the Wolverines could potentially be without about two dozen players who are weighing their options while Michigan's coaching situation remains undecided. Michigan players left Ann Arbor on Monday for Christmas and were to return on Friday, when they would depart for Orlando. Players who live within four hours of Orlando were permitted to travel separately.

While Poggi sounded confident on Monday telling local reporters that Michigan would have a nearly full

See **MICHIGAN**, page B2

Meet the MVP

Photo provided

Dowagiac's Devin Rock was named Team Ta'Tanka's MVP at the 2025 Native All American Bowl at US Bank Stadium in Minneapolis.

Dowagiac's Rock shines at Native All-American Game

MINNEAPOLIS — A Dowagiac senior was able to shine bright on a national stage.

Dowagiac senior and Pokagon Band citizen Devin Rock recently played in the Native All American Bowl in Minneapolis at US Bank Stadium. He was named team Ta'Tanka's MVP with two interceptions and three tackles.

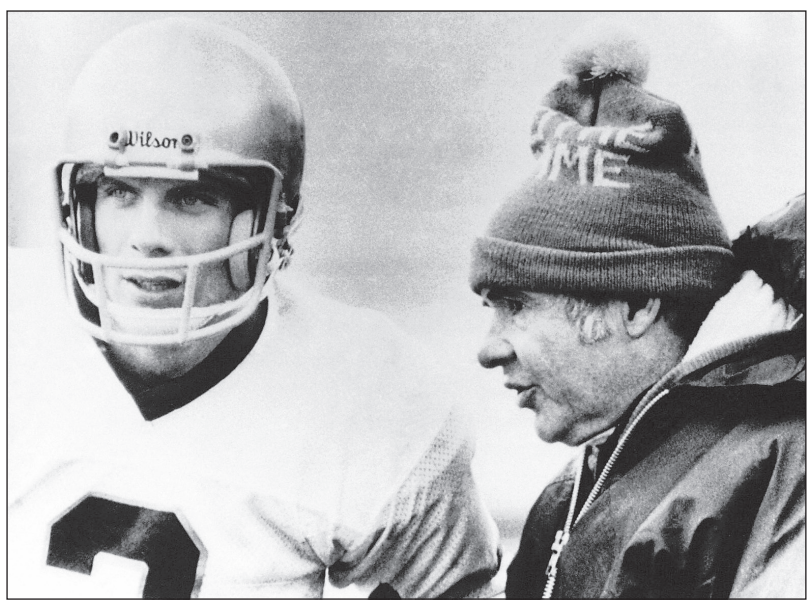
Rock – whose spirit name is Zhawskwë nemki nene which means "blue thunder man" – was selected as one of 70 high school football players to participate in the annual game, which was presented by the Native American Athletic Foundation in partnership with the NFL and Minnesota Vikings. Rock played for the home team, Team Ta'Tanka, and was coached by legendary Green Bay Packers rushing leader Ahman Green.

The annual event included a four-day camp from Dec. 10 to 13, where participants trained under former NFL players, including Green, Derek Fine, Levi Horn and Chase Johnson. Participants also took part in leadership workshops and heard from community leaders. The event is also a high-profile recruiting opportunity for players, with college and professional organizations and national media in attendance.

Rock is a four-year member of the Dowagiac varsity football team and has started for three years as defensive back on defense and playing running back, slot receiver and wide receiver on offense.

Over the course of his high school career, Rock has earned First Team All-Conference defensive back as a junior and is currently among the top in the state for interceptions this year, a two-time AAU Junior Olympics Qualifier, First Team All-Conference in the 4x400 meter and 4x200 meter relays in track and field and MVP awards for football and basketball during his freshman year.

Rock has also worked as a referee for many youth football games and enjoys spending time mentoring the younger players in the community. Outside of the world of sports, over the summer Devin worked for the Boys and Girls Club of Southwest Michigan which was hosted by the Pokagon Band and currently works at Lindy's Restaurant in Cassopolis.



Bill Haber photo

Notre Dame's quarterback Joe Montana (left) and head coach Dan Devine played a huge role in the 'Green Jersey Game' against USC in 1977.

Can college football be rescued from itself?

Ken Fox
Fox's Den

I went to my first college football game one day after Pete Buchanan led Plymouth High School to its lone state football championship.

Yes, it was quite the weekend in October 1977.

The college game was in South Bend, where Notre Dame was scheduled to play the University of Southern California.

USC.

It was an opportunity I fell into at the last minute, so despite being sleep-deprived after a late-night drive home with my dad and my friend Weasel – yes Weasel – from Indianapolis after Plymouth's title game, I was excited to be heading north the next morning.

I mean, come on, it's not an opportunity a kid raised Catholic 33 miles from the campus is going to turn down.

Notre Dame vs. USC ... "The House that Rockne Built" ... two teams ranked in the top 11 in the country. I still have the program and my ticket.

Not to go all "Rudy" on you, but I remember the chill I got walking into Notre Dame Stadium for the first time. I had gotten that same feeling at Wrigley Field a few years before and would again at Fenway Park and the old Chicago Stadium and when I drove into the infield for the Indianapolis 500 for the first time.

And, of course, a few years later when our Bethel

See **FOX**, page B2

Irish football announces series with Brighan Young, replacing USC

By NOTRE DAME ATHLETICS

SOUTH BEND, Ind. – The University of Notre Dame football team has announced that Notre Dame and Brigham Young University will play at Edwards Stadium in Provo, Utah in 2026, and at Notre Dame Stadium in 2027 in a home-and-home series. Specific dates and broadcast information will be announced at a later date.

The two programs have met on nine previous occasions as the Irish lead the all-time series 7-2. The series is tied at one win apiece in Provo while Notre Dame has a 5-1 advantage at home against BYU. Most recently, the Irish took a 28-20 win over the No. 16 ranked Cougars in the 2022 Shamrock Series contest at Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas.

The Irish have been ranked on five occasions while the Cougars have been ranked once in the all-time matchups between the two teams. The teams first faced off against one another on October 24, 1992 at Notre Dame Stadium as the No. 10 Irish prevailed 42-16. Notre Dame's first trip to Provo came on October 16, 1993 and saw the No. 3 ranked Irish win 45-20.

Notre Dame is 29-9-1 against current Big 12 teams all-time. The Irish have faced BYU more than any other current Big 12 member in the history of Notre Dame football.

MICHIGAN

From page B1

roster for the bowl game, during the podcast a day later, he painted a much less optimistic outlook.

"I think there's a really good chance that we're going to have many more opt-outs for the game, unfortunately," Poggi said. "Because we're in such a state of flux, and when they get to this business of it, they think, 'We don't have a coach, we've had this situation with our former coach, there's investigations, all these things. I don't know who's going to coach me. Why do I want to play in that game?' I can see some of that happening. I would tell you, on the 26th we're probably going to have a significantly different roster than we had when we sent them home."

Part of the problem, Poggi said, is the lack of clarity for the players regarding finances. Poggi said there are no financial agreements because there is no head coach, and on a recent Zoom meeting involving athletic director Warde Manual and players' parents, it was made clear there would be no negotiating with players until a new coach is in place. Meanwhile, the transfer portal opens Jan. 2, and when a program hires a new coach, the transfer portal opens five days later for those who want to leave.

While speaking with local reporters Monday, Poggi painted a brighter picture of how he has changed practice and meetings and that the players had an upbeat response. Practices and meetings before the players left on Monday were more abbreviated but also more up-tempo, good-on-good work, he said.

"I think they're actually having fun playing football again," Poggi said.

Poggi was asked when he noticed the players not having fun with football, and while he didn't put his finger on a specific time, he suggested they were spending too much time in the building and not using that time efficiently.

"When you ask kids to be in the building for multiple, multiple hours, and for example, let's say you have 30 minutes of new insertions to teach, but you want to keep them in the building for an hour and a half because you just want to keep them in the building for an hour and a half," Poggi said, citing examples, adding a two and a half hour practice probably can be condensed to an hour and a half. "(Then) it's not fun."

Poggi added: "They're not dumb. They get it. You know, they get it. We've changed that, and it has been – when you interview them, ask them – it's been a blast. It's been a blast for the coaches. It's been a blast for them. And the work has been outstanding. The level of practice has been outstanding. The concentration in meetings has been outstanding. We haven't played a game in a long time, so we'll see."

Texas also has made some changes since the end of the regular season as Sarkisian hired Will Muschamp as defensive coordinator after he moved on from Pete Kwiatkowski. Sarkisian also fired running backs coach Chad Scott after one season and hired former Florida running backs coach Jabbar Juluke. Despite the staff changes and the player opt-outs, Sarkisian said bowl practices have gone well.

Texas (9-3) believed it had the resume but was left out of the College Football Playoff. The Longhorns are 7.5-point favorites head into this game.

FOX

From page B1

College baseball team drove onto the Notre Dame campus to play a baseball doubleheader against the Fighting Irish.

But back to that October day, where 59,075 of us crowded into the old stadium to watch some high-level college football.

All seemed normal as the players warmed up for the game and then went back to the locker room for the final instructions from Notre Dame head coach Dan Devine.

Shortly after that, things got crazy.

First, a group of students rolled out a 15-foot tall Trojan horse from the tunnel where both teams would come out.

The student-designed wooden horse had room inside for several Notre Dame students dressed as players.

But in a few moments, the horse was all but forgotten, as the real Notre Dame players came out of the same tunnel now dressed in green jerseys for the first time in 14 years. Students came pouring out of the stands to greet the players and surround the horse.

It was a surreal moment I can remember like it happened yesterday, and the hair still stands up on my arms when I do.

Turns out, Devine had kept the green jerseys a secret from his team until they walked into the locker room after warming up wearing their normal home uniforms

A young Notre Dame quarterback from Pennsylvania named Joe Montana would run for two touchdowns and threw two more. The Irish blocked a punt for a touchdown and dominated the Trojans from the start on their way to a 49-19 victory.

We basically floated out of the stadium that day and I remember telling a friend that the Irish were good enough to win the national title.

In January, they did just that, beating Texas and Heisman Trophy winner Earl Campbell in the Cotton Bowl to secure the championship.

I've since watched the rivalry from the stands, in front of the television and covered it in person. I even took pictures on the sidelines for the Plymouth Pilot News while in college.

The teams, fans and alumni have never liked each other, but I never saw the rivalry get too far out of hand, as Miami-Notre Dame did in the 1980s and early '90s.

As a fan, you knew it would always be there – October in South Bend one year and in late November in Los Angeles the next.

There was a time the Trojans dominated the series, but the last nine years have provided seven Notre Dame wins and it didn't look like Irish head coach Marcus Freeman was about to give up that stranglehold.

But for now, we'll never know.

That's because the cesspool that college football has become has claimed another victim.

The two schools announced on Monday that there will be a "pause" in the series until at least 2030. Notre Dame also said it will play BYU for the next two years to take USC's place on the schedule.

So the rivalry started by Knute Rockne – that produced Reggie Bush and Jerome Bettis, Montana and Matt Leinart, Ross Browner and Troy Polamalu, Mike Golic and Ronnie Lott, Lynn Swann and Tim Brown, O.J. and Rocky Bleier – is no more.

Oh sure, both schools gave lip service about wanting to bring it back again, but I have a feeling that's all it is.

Southern Cal doesn't want to play another national power after moving from the Pac-12 to the Big Ten for conference play and Notre Dame seemed pretty fed up that USC backed out of the scheduled 2026 game.

The rhetoric on Twitter and I'm sure elsewhere on social media is pretty ugly from both sides. Accusations are flying about who is to blame or which side is "chickening out."

I'm not about to point fingers at either school, but in reality, there is one simple answer as to who is to blame.

College football.

Yes, the same organization that has allowed some players to have eight years of eligibility and others to earn millions of dollars ... the one that has Stanford in the ACC and Oregon in the Big Ten ... the one that's allowed ESPN to have a voice in who makes the College Football Playoffs (Tulane? James Madison?).

Yes, college football has lost its way.

Would a commissioner help? Perhaps, but who would it be?

Some say former Alabama coach Nick Saban, but he's become little more than a talking head at, of all places, ESPN. Jim Harbaugh? Umm, no. Lou Holtz is too old now and Notre Dame haters wouldn't allow it. Tim Tebow? The liberals would hate that. Condoleeza Rice makes sense to me, but she's probably too smart to get involved.

To me, there is an easy answer.

Andrew Luck.

That's right, the former Indianapolis Colts quarterback is currently the "general manager" at Stanford, his alma mater.

Luck has a master's degree in education from Stanford and has the knowledge both in football and business to try and rescue college football from itself.

But Luck is a very private person and chances are, he wouldn't be interested in such a high-profile job.

So the sport will continue to meander along until the controversies surrounding it become too much to bear and viewers begin to tune it out and the empty seats become too hard to ignore.

By then, it could be too late.

Ken Fox is the sports editor of The Elkhart Truth. You may reach him at kfox@elkharttruth.com or @KenFoxTruth on Twitter.

Brandywine hoops teams sweep rival Buchanan

Rivals Buchanan and Brandywine faced off in doubleheader action Friday, Dec. 19 at Buchanan High School. The Bobcats swept the matchups, with the girls team winning by a score of 66-23 and the boys 57-45.

Photos by Nick Shelton

The best reality TV of 2025

By YVONNE VILLARREAL, KAITLYN HUAMANI, VANESSA FRANKO and MAIRA GARCIA
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

Photos from Netflix / TNS

"Love Is Blind" participants Patrick Suzuki and Kacie McIntosh, after their short-lived engagement.

Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, in "With Love, Meghan."

Like it or not, reality shows were must-see TV this year, offering a much-needed distraction from the real world. Scandals involving breakups, fighting among friends and erratic behavior were among the highlights, but so were touching moments on shows known for having a lot less drama. If anything, series like such as "Love Island USA," "Dancing with the Stars" and "Mormon Wives" proved that Americans can come together, as long as it involves a little bit of competition or people speaking their truths – with a Barbie.

A dramatic exit on 'The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills'

Actress and producer Garcelle Beauvais made a dramatic exit from the series after six seasons. As Season 14's three-part reunion neared its conclusion, host Andy Cohen tried to wrangle the women to pose for a customary cast photo, but Beauvais wanted no part of it, muttering, "I'm out … nope, I'm not doing it," while walking off stage in her bejeweled gown. She shared more of her frustrations about the women in her dressing room. ("I can't be friends with people like that; I don't trust them. And they obviously don't like me. … I'm done.") It effectively marked her departure from the series. Her fallout with the ladies, particularly her former BFF Sutton Stracke, has already been a talking point in the current season. – Yvonne Villarreal

Liam Payne's posthumous appearance on 'Building the Band'

The death of One Direction star Liam Payne shocked and saddened fans across the world in 2024, but the singer and songwriter's love of music is now immortalized on screen. "Building the Band" is a Netflix reality competition series that followed singers who formed bands and worked with veteran musicians, including Payne, Nicole Scherzinger, Kelly Rowland and Backstreet Boys alum AJ McLean, who hosted. The series wrapped filming just months before Payne died, and when it aired in July, it opened with a dedication to Payne. "Through his presence, we see his deep love for music and his unwavering commitment to helping others find their voice," McLean said in the introduction. Payne mentored musicians in the competition, offering moving encouragement and sharp advice. In a dedication closing out the final episode, a clip from downtime during shooting showed Payne singing and dancing along to One Direction's "What Makes You Beautiful." He jumped down from the stage where he and the judges sat and joined the crowd, laughing and singing with the audience. "That was so fun," he said as he returned to his seat. It's a truly touching moment, illustrating his warm and energetic spirit.

– Kaitlyn Huamani

Huda Mustafa's crash-outs on 'Love Island USA'

Thanks to my friends, I became "Love Island" -pilled this year. While the "Mommy? Mamacita" conversation, where Huda Mustafa revealed that she was a mom to a confused Nic, was the meme of the summer, it was Huda's crash-outs – plural – that provided ongoing fodder for our group chat. Which was the most iconic? Was it when a trucker-hat-wearing Huda started bawling after Amaya kissed beau Jeremiah during a game? (That's our avatar.) What about when new islander Iris went on a date with Jeremiah, and after she recounted it, Huda bitterly responded that their beach get-together was her "dream date"? Perhaps it was when Huda's new beau Chris abandoned her at their weird grotto dinner date after their breakup in the finale. But for real, we hope Huda has access to a good therapist and finds someone who will take her on that beach dream date.

– Vanessa Franko

How race and class were discussed in Season 9 of 'Love Is Blind'

For the first time, no couples said "I do" on Netflix's reality dating show, but it's the journey to the altar that's the most compelling part of this series. Conversations about class hit their peak in the Denver-set season, as couples such as Jordan Keltner, a service manager and single father, and "Sparkle" Megan Walerius, an entrepreneur who discussed her wealth often, ultimately decided to call it quits before ever walking down the aisle because of the disparities in their lifestyles. For Anton Yarosh and Ali Lima, work and lifestyle were also among the reasons they split. Anton was referred to as just a "truck driver," and Ali didn't hide her desire to be taken care of, which included being able to continue her Botox injections if she quit her nursing job to go back to school. But the most interesting discussions centered on race, especially when it came to Patrick Suzuki, an Asian American contestant, who gradually opened up about his insecurities about his race with Anna Yuan, who is also Asian, and Kacie McIntosh, to whom he proposed. But the most devastating moment came when Kacie called off the engagement before the group trip to Mexico, despite her assurances that it had nothing to do with Patrick's race or looks. It was a confusing moment for Patrick and viewers, but his candor and decision to wear his heart on his sleeve made him more sympathetic.

– Maira Garcia

When Meghan explained her surname on 'With Love, Meghan'

While carefully making star-shaped cucumber sandwiches for an imaginary children's party for her Netflix lifestyle show, the former "Suits" star made sure to remind her friend and guest Mindy Kaling (and us, for that matter) that she has a new-ish last name. The exchange arrived in Season1, Episode 2, as Meghan detailed how she grew up as an average American latchkey kid who ate a lot of fast food.

"Uh, I don't think anyone in the world knows that Meghan Markle has eaten Jack in the Box and loves it," Kaling quipped.

"It's so funny, too, that you keep saying 'Meghan Markle.' You know I'm Sussex now," the duchess replied. The correction is met with a brief pause from Kaling, whose real-time processing felt tailor-made to be dubbed with "the woman was too stunned to speak" viral TikTok audio.

Meghan goes on to explain the importance of sharing a last name with her children. "Well, now I know, and I love it," Kaling responded. I'm not a hate-watcher of the show or its star – I, too, wish to moonlight as a domestic doyenne. But I remain fascinated with how most things related to Meghan become ammunition. The clip quickly caused a stir on social media and prompted more debate on the complexities surrounding her family's last name now that they are outside the royal structure. Meanwhile, I'm still stuck on the use of "flower sprinkles" as a garnish for scrambled eggs.

– Y.V.

The 'Mormon Wives' pass a talking stick and 'take accountability'

MomTok survived another year! The third season of Hulu's "The Secret Lives of Mormon Wives," which follows Utah-based social media influencers with varying degrees of faith, was not short on dramatic moments. There were heated confrontations, stunning accusations and even lie detector tests, but one of the season's best moments came via a reconciliation effort. Whitney Leavitt (of newfound "Dancing With the Stars" fame) and Mayci Neeley gathered the group together so they could air out their issues and "take accountability," a phrase that's said ad nauseum on the show. The assembly was an organized affair, with each woman snapping a glowstick around their neck after they've "spoken their truth" and a Barbie named Eve, who acted as the "talking stick," was passed around to avoid cross talk. While the concept of the gathering was ridiculous, it gave viewers some juicy moments and underscored what makes this show so good: These are young women dealing with very complex issues and being incredibly forthcoming about it all, even if their conflict resolution resembles that of "Mean Girls" – it's a parallel they lovingly acknowledge.

– K.H.

Kirk Cousins' musical stylings in 'Quarterback' Season 2

The inside baseball, or in this case, football, makes this Netflix series a fascinating watch for NFL fans, but pulling back the curtain on the gridiron gods' humanity is where it shines. Nobody is more relatable than book-loving Kohl's shopper Kirk Cousins, who's back for a second season and on a new team waxing poetic about how Tom Petty's "I Won't Back Down" fueled his comeback win for the Falcons. During a practice, Cousins explains that Celine Dion provided the soundtrack of his youth, promising a coach that "If you play Celine Dion 'I Drove All Night,' I'll have the best practice I've ever had." But the pièce de résistance is Cousins, his brother and friends in the drive-thru line of a fast food joint joyfully singing Cher's "Believe" after a win – the antithesis of the sad Zac Efron meme – complete with harmonies. Cousins' young son asks them to stop, but as the quarterback says, "Sometimes you just have to sing Cher." – V.F.

The entirety of Season 2 of 'The Valley'

It felt as dark as a true crime doc. Full stop. Sure, toxic drama playing out on reality TV has become the norm in the misguided pursuit of must-see TV, but the darkness that unfolded on the recent season of the " Vanderpump Rules " spinoff was unrelenting in its intensity. After debuting with the promise of a light and entertaining look at these former hard-partying millennials entering a phase of life focused on growing up, marriage and sometimes parenthood, the whole thing quickly felt more like a horror show. The docusoap's second season centered on Jax Taylor and Brittany Cartwright's turbulent separation, with Taylor's erratic behavior, accusations of cheating, financial issues and substance abuse culminating in Cartwright moving out of their home and Taylor checking into rehab. And they weren't the only ones casting a bleak and dysfunctional light on the show. There was feuding between Jesse Lally and Michelle Saniei, with Lally accusing his ex-wife of being a hooker, and Danny Booko's relationship with alcohol was put in the hot seat. It was the sort of season that gets a reality TV die-hard considering the ethics of watching it all unfold.

– Y.V.

Tom Sandoval's rise from rock bottom on 'The Traitors'

I didn't think the adulterous villain from the OG "Vanderpump Rules" was long for Alan Cumming's campy Scottish castle because everyone remembers " Scandoval " and what he did to Ariana Madix, but I was wrong. We were treated to weeks of entertaining chaos from Sandoval – once he stopped sweating profusely at the breakfast table. Forever spouting hilariously wrong theories about the Traitors, I started to feel bad for him when his teammates made fun of him as he sang backwards lullabies played by creepy dolls. He was genuinely focused on the mission, and while he was absolutely ridiculous as he crowed about his musical prowess – and his performances were even more disturbing than the dolls' – he really did try to play the game the right way. Ultimately, Sandoval's "Traitors" turn easily cracks the top five of reality show redemption arcs, which might be the best twist that nobody saw coming.

– V.F.

An (alleged) affair to remember on 'The Real Housewives of Miami'

She's not even technically part of the main cast, but Adriana de Moura knows eclipsing a bombshell revelation is a surefire way to keep a firm grip on her "friend of" title. Ordinarily, a reveal like the one that arrived in the show's Season 7 reunion – Julia Lemigova's shocking admission that she slept with De Moura, her former BFF whom she had grown distant from during the season, on a cast trip – would have singularly powered the fandom's social media discussion. And it did. But it was quickly overshadowed by one viral soundbite. After Lemigova exposed their alleged affair, De Moura claimed Lemigova had previously cheated on her wife, former tennis pro Martina Navratilova – or as De Moura said with her whole chest: "She was cheating on Martina with a Haitian mortician!" As if that wasn't enough to process, it was followed up with the claim that Lemigova "would take him to the motel, pay for the motel, bring the champagne and had to give him a coffee machine as a gift." It made TikTok scrolling an LOL wonderland. But "Housewives" fans are familiar with De Moura's comebacks. One of her past viral reunion moments involved penning a letter as her cocktail-loving frenemy's liver.

– Y.V.

Nataliia's homage to Ukraine on 'Great British Baking Show'

This is one of the friendliest and gentlest competition shows on television, and it never ceases to surprise me by showing how such wildly creative and humble people – who regard themselves simply as home bakers – exist in the world. Series 16 featured another group of endearing contestants, including Nataliia Richardson, a Ukrainian who settled in England with her family just before the war with Russia broke out. In the first episode, Nataliia pays homage to her homeland with a beautiful Ukraine landscape cake that looks more like a surrealist painting than a pastry. The work earned her Star Baker for the week – a well-deserved honor. It was a reminder that for Ukrainian citizens who've had to flee their war-torn country, their hearts are always with their homeland.

– M.G.

Robert Irwin's moves on 'Dancing with the Stars'

This was the year Robert Irwin stepped out from the shadow of his father. Steve Irwin wowed audiences as the "Crocodile Hunter," his TV persona with the notable catchword "Crikey!" and who had an enthusiasm for wildlife, often wrangling or hovering dangerously close to reptiles in his signature khaki shorts and chest-bearing shirts. And while the late TV personality's son has followed in his father's footsteps with his interest in wildlife, this year, he also gripped the attention of American TV viewers with his own stealth moves … on the dance floor. But the 22-year-old's spin through this year's season of "Dancing with the Stars" was more than just the usual fare of flashy costumes and impressive dance moves. He became a certified reality TV heartthrob with his onscreen presence and slick routines with partner Witney Carson, delivering some meme-worthy facial expressions and plenty of moments – both emotional and thirst trap-adjacent – to feed TikTok. It was quite the unexpected glow-up. And like his sister Bindi, who competed a decade ago, he took home the mirrorball trophy. Crikey, indeed

– Y.V.

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"Notice of Self Storage Sale Please take notice Aloha Storage located at 3001 South 11th Street, Niles, MI, 49120 intends to hold an Auction of storage unit in default of payment. **The sale will occur at the facility on 1/23/2025 at 12:00 PM.** Contents: cooling/heating air ducts and furnishings, and garage essentials. Unit #D004. This sale may be withdrawn at any time without notice."

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Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the Circuit Court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM, on January 7, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): Donald Gordan Davies, III, Married Man Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nominee for Churchill Mortgage Corporation, its successors and assigns Foreclosing Assignee: PennyMac Loan Services, LLC Date of Mortgage: November 17, 2023 Date of Mortgage Recording: November 29, 2023 Amount claimed due on mortgage on the date of notice: $176,696.64 Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in the Village of Vandalia, Cass County, Michigan, and are described as: Beginning at a point which is 507.5 feet South of the Southeast corner of State and Maple Streets in Section 26, Township 6 South, Range 14 West; thence East 300.5 feet; thence South 132 feet; thence West 300.5 feet to the East Line of Maple Street; thence North 132 feet to the Place of Beginning. Commonly Known as: 60795 Maple St., Vandalia, MI 49095 The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale, or upon the expiration of the notice required by MCL 600.3241a(c), whichever is later; or unless MCL 600.3240(16) applies. If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, under MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. Attention Purchaser: This sale may be rescinded by the foreclosing mortgagee for any reason. In that event, your damages, if any, shall be limited solely to the return of the bid amount tendered at sale, plus interest, and the purchaser shall have no further recourse against the Mortgagor, the Mortgagee, or the Mortgagee's attorney. Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. This notice is from a debt collector. Date of notice: 12/06/2025 Potestivo & Associates, P.C. 251 Diversion Street, Rochester, MI 48307 248-853-4400 319660 (12-06)(12-27)

Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement
Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM, on January 7, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information:
Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): Micah J. Tartt, a married man and Karrie Tartt, his wife and Christine Rae Davis, an unmarried woman
Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as nominee for lender and lender's successors and/or assigns
Foreclosing Assignee (if any): Wells Fargo Bank, N.A.
Date of Mortgage: July 10, 2003
Date of Mortgage Recording: July 14, 2003
Amount claimed due on date of notice: $36,364.03
Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in City of Dowagiac, Cass County, Michigan, and described as: LOT NUMBERED FOURTEEN (14) HARTER, ANDREWS AND BLISH ADDITION TO THE PLAT THEREOF AS RECORDED IN LIBER 34 OF DEEDS, PAGE 136, CASS COUNTY RECORDS.
Common street address (if any): 116 E Railroad St, Dowagiac, MI 49047-1448
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a; or, if the subject real property is used for agricultural purposes as defined by MCL 600.3240(16).
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage
foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period.
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
This notice is from a debt collector.
Date of notice: December 6, 2025
Trott Law, P.C.
31440 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 145
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
(248)642-2515 1578472 (12-06)(12-27)

Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement
Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM, on January 14, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information:
Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): Cheryl Reeves, a married couple and Ronald Reeves, a married couple
Original Mortgagee: ABN Amro Mortgage Group, Inc.
Foreclosing Assignee (if any): NewRez LLC d/b/a Shellpoint Mortgage Servicing
Date of Mortgage: February 16, 2001
Date of Mortgage Recording: March 2, 2001
Amount claimed due on date of notice: $25,159.23
Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in Township of Wayne, Cass County, Michigan, and described as: Parcel 1:
Lots numbered 9 and 10, Block 44 Twin Shores, Wayne Township, according to the Plat thereof as recorded in Liber 1 of Plats, Page 156, Cass County Records.
Parcel 2:
Lots 27 and 28, Block 44, Twin Shores, a Subdivision, according to the recorded Plat thereof, recorded in the office of register of deed Cass County, Michigan, said Plat being situated in Sections 15 and 16, Wayne Township, Cass County, Michigan.
Common street address (if any): 52950 Chappel St, Dowagiac, MI 49047-9452
The redemption period shall be 1 year from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a.
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period.
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
This notice is from a debt collector.
Date of notice: December 13, 2025
Trott Law, P.C.
31440 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 145
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
(248) 642-2515 1579380 (12-13)(01-03)

RESERVE THIS SPACE TODAY!

FORECLOSURE NOTICE (ALL COUNTIES) AS A DEBT COLLECTOR, WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. ATTENTION HOMEOWNER: IF YOU ARE A MILITARY SERVICE MEMBER ON ACTIVE DUTY, IF YOUR PERIOD OF ACTIVE DUTY HAS CONCLUDED LESS THAN 90 DAYS AGO, OR IF YOU HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO ACTIVE DUTY, PLEASE CONTACT THE ATTORNEY FOR THE PARTY FORECLOSING THE MORTGAGE AT THE TELEPHONE NUMBER STATED IN THIS NOTICE. Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement – Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM a.m./p.m. on January 21, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. Default having been made in the terms and conditions of a certain mortgage made by Eddie L Adkins, and Paula L Adkins of Cass County, Michigan, Mortgagor to Notre Dame Federal Credit Union dated the 9th day of February, 2022, and recorded in the office of the Register of Deeds, for the County of Cass and State of Michigan, on the 18th day of November, 2025, Liber 1268, Page 2039, of the Cass County Records on which mortgage there is claimed to be due, at the date of this notice, for principal of $36,267.38 plus accrued interest at 7.50000% percent per annum. Which said premises are described as follows: All that certain piece or parcel of land situated in the Township of Milton, in the County of Cass and State of Michigan and described as follows to wit: Part of the Northeast 1/4 of Section 14. Town 8 South, Range 16 West, described as: Beginning at the North 1/4 comer of Section 14; thence South 89 degrees 56` 00" East along the North line of said Section 249.00 feel; thence South 0 degrees 04` 00" West at right angles to said North line 327.00 feet; thence North 89 degrees 56` 00" West 248.60 feet to the North and South 1/4 line of said Section; thence North along said 1/4 line 327.00 feet to the point of beginning. Being subject to that portion along the North and West sides thereof as being used for highway purposes. Commonly known as: 70051 Brush Road, Niles, MI 49120 Tax ID: 14-070-014-003-50 If the property is sold at a foreclosure sale the borrower, pursuant to MCLA 600.3278 will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. The redemption period shall be six months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale. Dated: December 20, 2025 By: Benjamin N. Hoen #P-81415 Weltman, Weinberg & Reis Co., L.P.A. 5990 West Creek Road, Suite 200 Independence, OH 44131 Telephone: 216-739-5100 Fax: 216-363-4034 Email: bhoen@weltman.com WWR#: 25-000827-1. (12-20)(01-10)

INVITATION FOR BIDS
Drywall Systems Removal and Replacement
Shkwéngen Apartments, 500 Hill Street, Dowagiac, MI 49047

The Pokagon Band Department of Housing & Community Development is seeking sealed bid proposals from qualified contractors for the Shkwéngen Drywall Systems Removal and Replacement Project at the Shkwéngen Apartments located at 500 Hill Street, Dowagiac, MI 49047. The project involves asbestos containing materials (ACM). The Deadline for submittal of Bids is 3:00 p.m., Wednesday, January 21, 2026, at which time there will be a Public Bid Opening at the Department of Housing and Community Development Offices at 57824 Potawatomi Trail, Dowagiac, Michigan 49047.

The project involves the careful disconnection from drywall systems and temporary relocation of existing fixtures and appurtenances, including but not limited to cabinetry, light fixtures, appliances, and countertops within each apartment unit, to facilitate ACM containing drywall systems removal and replacement. The intent is to reinstall and reuse the temporarily relocated items which must be protected from dust and debris during the removal of ACM-containing drywall systems. Approximately 60,000 square feet of affected drywall systems will be removed and properly disposed of from walls and ceilings across three two-story apartment buildings, which include 27 residential units and a common laundry room.

Following the removal and proper disposal of the affected drywall systems, environmental clearance will be confirmed to ensure the area is safe for reentry and reconstruction. New drywall systems will then be installed in compliance with applicable building codes and refinished to match the original appearance. Once the new systems are in place, all temporarily removed items will be reinstalled in their original locations. Any fixtures and appurtenances that were removed but not suitable for reuse will be replaced to restore each unit to its pre-removal condition.

Interested contractors may obtain a copy of the bid package, or further information by contacting: Robert Torzynski, Planning Manager, Department of Housing & Community Development by telephone at (269) 462-0688 or by email at: Robert.Torzynski@PokagonBand-nsn.gov.

NOTICE OF MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE SALE Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following Mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM, on February 11, 2026. The amount due on the Mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. Default has been made in the conditions of a Mortgage made by Richard K. Burkhart and Linda Burkhart to One Reverse Mortgage, LLC dated July 18, 2018 and recorded July 26, 2018 in Liber 1142 at Page 1901, Cass County, Michigan. Said Mortgage is now held by Longbridge Financial, LLC by assignment and/or merger. There is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of $133,134.49. Said premises are located in Cass County, Michigan and are described as: Land situated in the Township of Newberg in the County of Cass in the State of MI ALL THAT CERTAIN PIECE OR PARCEL OF LAND SITUATED IN THE TOWNSHIP OF NEWBERG, COUNTY OF CASS, AND STATE OF MICHIGAN, AND SPECIFICALLY DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS, TO WIT: "THAT PART OF THE WEST HALF OF THE NORTHWEST QUARTER OF SECTION 31, TOWN 6 SOUTH, RANGE 13 WEST, NEWBERG TOWNSHIP, CASS COUNTY, MICHIGAN DESCRIBED AS; "PARCEL A" FROM THE WEST QUARTER CORNER OF SAID SECTION MEASURE SOUTH 89° 35' EAST, 446.90 FEET ALONG THE EAST AND WEST QUARTER LINE OF SAID SECTION; THENCE MEASURE NORTH 32° 50' EAST ALONG THE CENTER LINE OF LEWIS LAKE ROAD, 489.70 FEET; THENCE MEASURE NORTH 28° 55' EAST, 395.80 FEET; THENCE MEASURE NORTH 32° 50' EAST, 23.00 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING OF THE LAND HEREIN DESCRIBED; THENCE NORTH 75° 41' WEST, 179.99 FEET; THENCE NORTH 32° 38' EAST, 62.28 FEET; THENCE NORTH 80° 04' EAST, 232.60 FEET TO THE EAST LINE OF THE WEST HALF OF THE NORTHWEST QUARTER OF SAID SECTION; THENCE SOUTH 32° 50' WEST, 162.90 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING. ALSO INCLUDING ALL LANDS BETWEEN THE MOST WESTERLY DESCRIBED LINE AND THE WATERS EDGE OF LEWIS LAKE. CONTAINING 0.43 ACRES." Said property is commonly known as 61336 Lewis Lake Rd, Vandalia, MI 49095. The redemption period shall be 12 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCLA 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale. If the property is sold at foreclosure sale, pursuant to MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damage to the property during the redemption period. TO ALL PURCHASERS: The foreclosing mortgagee can rescind the sale. In that event, your damages, if any, are limited solely to the return of the bid amount tendered at sale, plus interest. Please be advised that any third party purchaser is responsible for preparing and recording the Sheriff's Deed. If this is a residential Mortgage, the following shall apply: ATTENTION HOMEOWNER: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the Mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. THIS COMMUNICATION IS FROM A DEBT COLLECTOR. THIS IS AN ATTEMPT TO COLLECT A DEBT, AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. IF YOU: ARE A DEBTOR IN AN ACTIVE BANKRUPTCY CASE; ARE UNDER THE PROTECTION OF A BANKRUPTCY STAY; OR, HAVE RECEIVED A DISCHARGE IN BANKRUPTCY AND YOU HAVE NOT REAFFIRMED THE DEBT, THIS NOTICE IS FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY AND SHOULD NOT BE CONSTRUED AS AN ATTEMPT TO COLLECT A DEBT FROM YOU PERSONALLY. Dated: December 8, 2025 Attorney for the party foreclosing the Mortgage: Thomas E. McDonald (P39312) Brock & Scott, PLLC 5431 Oleander Drive Wilmington, NC 28403 PHONE: (844) 856-6646 File No. 25-32312. (12-13)(01-03)

OUTDOORS

Submitting hunting or fishing photos

Have a behemoth buck, a tremendous turkey or super-sized salmon? Please submit photos to sports@TheHP.com.

Your photo must be in focus, all persons in the photo must be identified, and the general location of the hunt must be provided (for example, 10-point buck shot in Benton Township, black bear shot near Munising, Mich., etc.)

Sarett Nature Center photo

Two evening grosbeaks on Nov. 22 at the feeders at Sarett Nature Center in Benton Twp.

Evening grosbeaks a regular sight this fall

Jonathan Wuepper
Southwest Michigan Wildlife

Two female evening grosbeaks were seen on Nov. 22 at the feeders of Sarett Nature Center in Benton Township. This past fall saw a flurry of evening grosbeak sightings in Southwest Michigan, marking the first observations of this northern finch in Berrien County in nearly one-and-a-half years.

It was on April 7, 1823 when Henry Schoolcraft took the type-specimen of the evening grosbeak at Sault Sainte Marie in the Michigan Territory. From Schoolcraft's specimen, the evening grosbeak was first described to science as a new species. The vernacular name was given to the species based on the misnomer that the birds sang just before twilight, which we now know is untrue.

The male evening grosbeak looks similar to an oversized American goldfinch with a large conical bill. Female evening grosbeaks, seen in the accompanying photo, lack the vibrant yellow-gold chest and back of the males.

Evening grosbeaks are a common nesting species in coniferous forests in Canada and the northern US. In Michigan, they nest in the Upper Peninsula and are also found sporadically in the northern Lower Peninsula during the nesting season.

Evening grosbeaks are an irregular winter visitor when food supplies are scarce in the north. Several years may pass between sightings in our region.

Note that the evening grosbeak will come to bird feeding stations and it prefers the striped sunflower seed as opposed to the black-oil sunflower seed.

During years when evening grosbeaks are prevalent in Southwest Michigan, they generally begin to appear in late October or November. The species most often departs our area in the early spring, occasionally staying until early May.

Brad Anderson photographed a pair of horned larks on Dec. 3 near the intersection of Gray and Hinchman Roads in Baroda Township.

Horned larks are present all year in large, open areas of Southwest Michigan, although their numbers are smaller during the nesting season compared to the winter season.

Anderson also provided a nice photo of an adult Cooper's hawk, taken on Dec. 3 near his backyard feeders in Bridgman.

Cooper's hawks are also present in Southwest Michigan during the entire year. In winter the local population increases as individuals that nest to our north migrate here. Cooper's hawks are often seen near bird feeders, where they pick off smaller birds or mammals for a meal.

Jonathan Wuepper is an area naturalist. Report your sightings to him at wuepperj@gmail.com

Photo provided / Brad Anderson

Two horned larks on Dec. 3 in Baroda Township.

Photo provided / Brad Anderson

A Cooper's Hawk on Dec. 3 in Bridgman.

Sarett Nature Center

Sarett Nature Stewards: 2-4 p.m. each Wednesday. This program is a way to experience Sarett in a whole different way. By being a nature steward you are helping Sarett but you also gain a sense of well-being. Sarett's crew will teach you many different skills such as collecting viable seeds for future planting, how to identify invasive species from native ones, removing invasive plants, and more. For ages 10 and older.

Audubon Christmas Bird Count: 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Dec. 30. Sarett is looking for volunteers to count birds as a part of Audubon's annual Christmas Bird Count event to create a census of birds. Volunteers will cover a portion of the official count area and drive around to tally up all the birds they see. To volunteer, please call (269) 927-4832 ext. 102 or email Mike at mikem@sarett.org.

Email info for Get Outdoors to sports@TheHP.com, or call 429-1294 by Monday.

Elusive cougar cubs documented again in Michigan

From THE MICHIGAN DNR

Nine months after two cougar kittens were documented in the Upper Peninsula, a new trail camera photo indicates the elusive animals are still alive and living with their mother.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources verified the Dec. 6 photo of an adult cougar being followed by two kittens down a snowy trail in central Ontonagon County. The last time the kittens were documented – in early March – they were only about two months old and their mother was nowhere in sight, raising concerns about the kittens' survival.

But the newly verified photo shows an adult cougar with two juvenile cougars that appear to be about a year old, according to Brian Roell, the DNR's large carnivore specialist.

Michigan is home to very few cougars and genetic testing has confirmed the existence of only adult males. The new photo suggests one of the first instances of cougar reproduction to take place outside the cougars' core area in the Western states.

"This is a historic confirmation for Michigan since it is the first time in over 100 years that verified cougar reproduction has occurred east of the Mississippi River and possible even east of the Missouri River," Roell said.

A private landowner sent the trail camera photo of the cougars to the DNR on Sunday, Dec. 14. Roell verified the site of the photo to the following Monday and the DNR's cougar team confirmed the photo that Tuesday by enhancing the nighttime image to verify the existence of the three cougars. The sex of the kittens is unknown.

Cougar kittens, or cubs, generally stay with their mother for about two years before venturing out on their own.

"The kittens' chances of survival are actually pretty high because just like bears, cougars invest a lot of their energy into their young," Roell said. "So these kittens will stay with their mom through this winter and possibly even into next winter. They already have a leg up, seeing as how they've been with her for a year now."

Roell is surprised the cougar kittens weren't documented from any public or private trail cameras since March. The DNR operates more than 1,300 trail cameras in the U.P. to survey wildlife abundance.

"The interesting thing is, where were they for nine months?" Roell says. "That's a mystery."

Native to Michigan, cougars were essentially hunted out of the state by the early 1900s. Since 2008, the DNR has confirmed about 168 cougar sightings, all in the U.P., although most of those sightings are of the same animal being reported by multiple sources, Roell said.

Cougar sightings have increased each year since 2019, Roell added, but the number of trail cameras has also increased. Cougar sightings on DNR-operated cameras accounted for more than 25 percent of the verified cougar sightings in 2024.

In addition to the cougar kittens in Michigan, there have been more cougars reported in other areas, including Nebraska. However, cougars need vast territories because they are solitary ambush predators that rely on deer and other large prey, which leads to low population densities. Even states with the largest cougar populations generally have just a few thousand of the animals.

"This isn't an animal that is ever going to become very numerous," Roell said. "They're going to remain rare on the landscape regardless of whatever happens with them here in Michigan."

Cougars are on the list of endangered mammals in Michigan, meaning it's illegal to hunt or harass them, which includes trying to locate their den on public or private property.

"Too much human pressure can also trigger the female cougar to abandon her cubs," Roell said. "As with all wild animals, we're asking the public to respect their habitat and allow them to live naturally in their home."

Photo courtesy of private landowner

An adult cougar walks down a trail in the Upper Peninsula followed by two cougar cubs on Dec. 6. The Michigan DNR verified this photo from a private trail camera by enhancing the image to verify the existence of the three cougars, including the cub bringing up the rear.

After a decade off, Florida resumes bear hunting this weekend– here's what to expect

By STEPHEN HUDAK
Orlando Sentinel (TNS)

ORLANDO, Fla. — Hunters will fan out across Florida beginning Saturday as the first sanctioned hunt of black bears in a decade kicks off amid sharply divided public opinion and efforts by humane advocates to cajole – and even pay – sportsmen not to shoot the state's largest land mammal.

Through a lottery system, state wildlife officials awarded 172 bear tags last month to people with a hunting license, each good for a one-bear "harvest," the term the state Fish & Wildlife agency uses for a kill.

Some say the hunt, now authorized as an annual event, is overdue given the surge in the species' numbers. "My perspective on this slowly changed as I witnessed the population boom and the havoc it is causing," said Ian, a hunter from Volusia County who responded to an Orlando Sentinel survey of tag holders but asked to be identified by first name only. State officials estimate there are more than 4,000 bears in Florida today, up from a low of several hundred in the 1970s.

But as many as 50 tag holders won't hunt, said Susannah Randolph, who heads Sierra Club Florida, which launched a strategy to "bag a tag and spare a bear." The organization co-funded lottery entries with other moneyed conservationists and animal "rescuers" like businessman Steve Rosen who said he ponied up more than $200,000 to win tags that would not be used.

Each application cost $5.

Even one dead bear is too many, said Katrina Shadix, founder of Bear Warriors United, a Central Florida-based, not-for-profit advocacy group which unsuccessfully sued the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission in Tallahassee to block the hunt.

A judge last month rejected arguments the wildlife agency had used bad science and "stale" population data to set harvest goals.

On the Bear Warrior Facebook page, Shadix then offered $2,000 to bear-tag holders not to hunt. She said 20 hunters signed on.

"They needed money to pay bills," Shadix said.

Chuck Echenique, a lifelong hunter from the Tampa area, said he suspects the Bear Warrior numbers are exaggerated. He estimated about 30 people who won bear-tags are non-hunters who submitted hundreds of lottery entries to thwart FWC's bear management plan.

About two dozen recipients paid $1,750 each for 350 entries, state records show. Four others spent $2,000 for 400 entries each.

Echenique said he will be part of a hunting party that includes two permit-holders on private land in northern Florida, where trail cameras regularly spy large male black bears roaming the woodlands near the Florida-Georgia line and the Osceola National Forest.

The hunt, which ends Dec. 28, was set late in the year to limit risk to female bears which are more likely to be denning with cubs.

"It's not going to be an easy hunt," Echenique said, citing a rainy forecast and the tendency of male bears to move at night.

He predicted about 100 bears will be harvested in this hunt, which FWC expects to hold annually.

Hunters killed 304 bears in 2015, a scheduled seven-day season halted after two days as kills neared the 320 harvest goal.

The Sentinel obtained a list of licensed hunters awarded a bear permit through FWC's tag lottery, then emailed questions to the applicants given permission to hunt in the Central Florida bear management area's hunting zone; tag holders with addresses in Orange, Lake, Seminole or Volusia counties; and out-of-state applicants who won a permit to kill a Florida bear.

Most who replied said they would not hunt bears.

"I hope they are all hiding," said Janis Ingham of Casselberry.

"This is Florida not the isolated parts of Alaska where a bear might provide food and clothing to a family," she replied in an email to the newspaper. "We have a market on every corner and have no need to hunt, especially bears. Additionally, due to over development, the bear management units are fragmented to the point that bears are unable to safely cross ranges which is impacting their genetic diversity."

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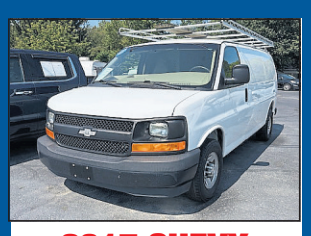

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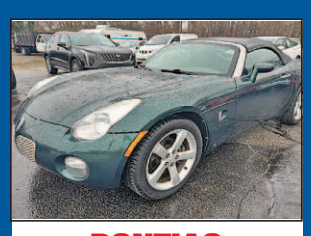

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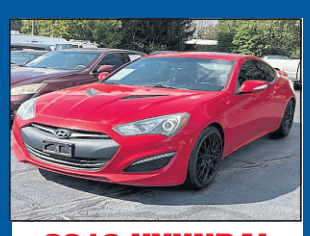

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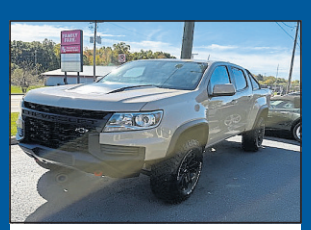

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